

108

songs of separation



विरहसंगीता

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kate-0-8 25; simha franklin 29
c.d. 31; e-luv-swamee 33

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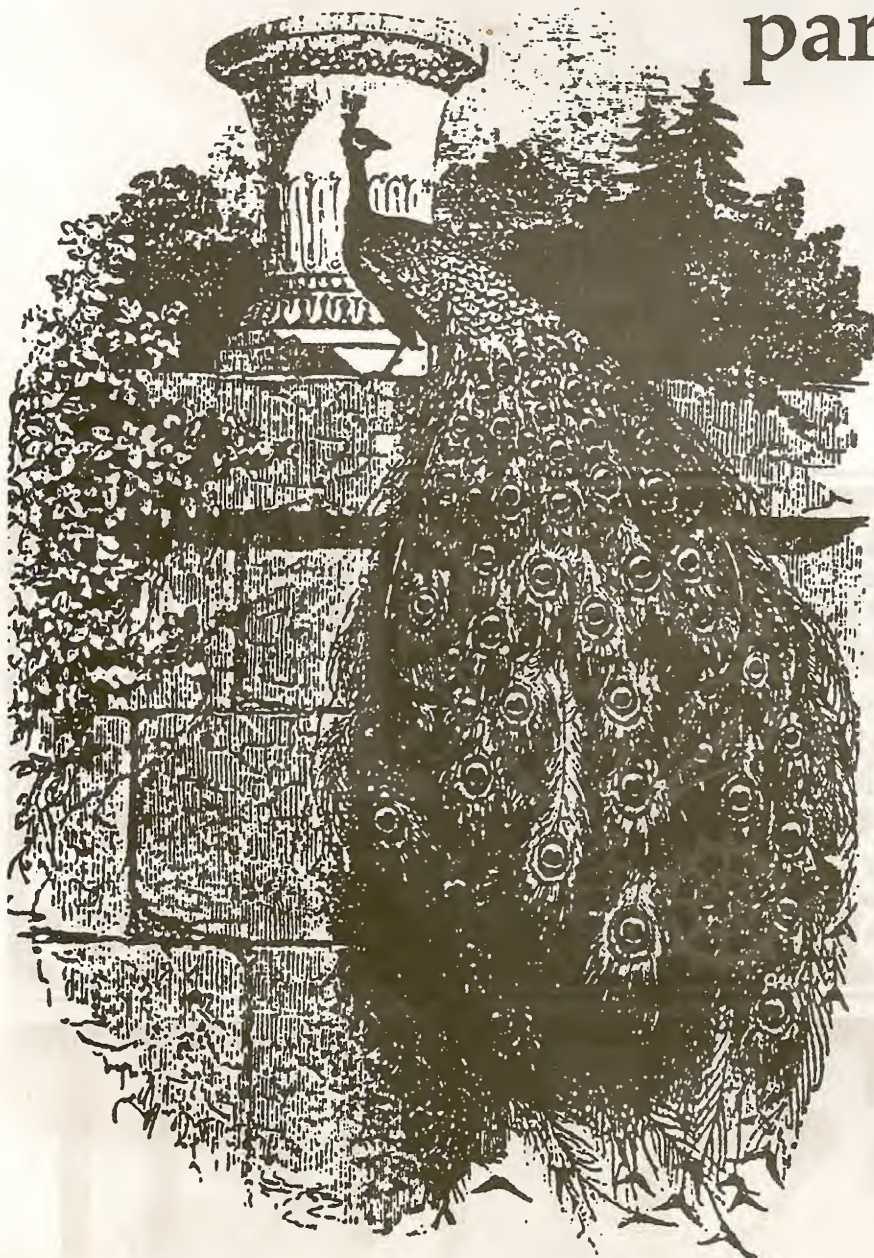
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Please send an extra envelope and stamp.

Photo captions:

p 0 — Break-dancing is back! p 1 — ST "Possessed to
chant." p 2 — Scott Ian. p 6 — Anyone got an extra shirt?
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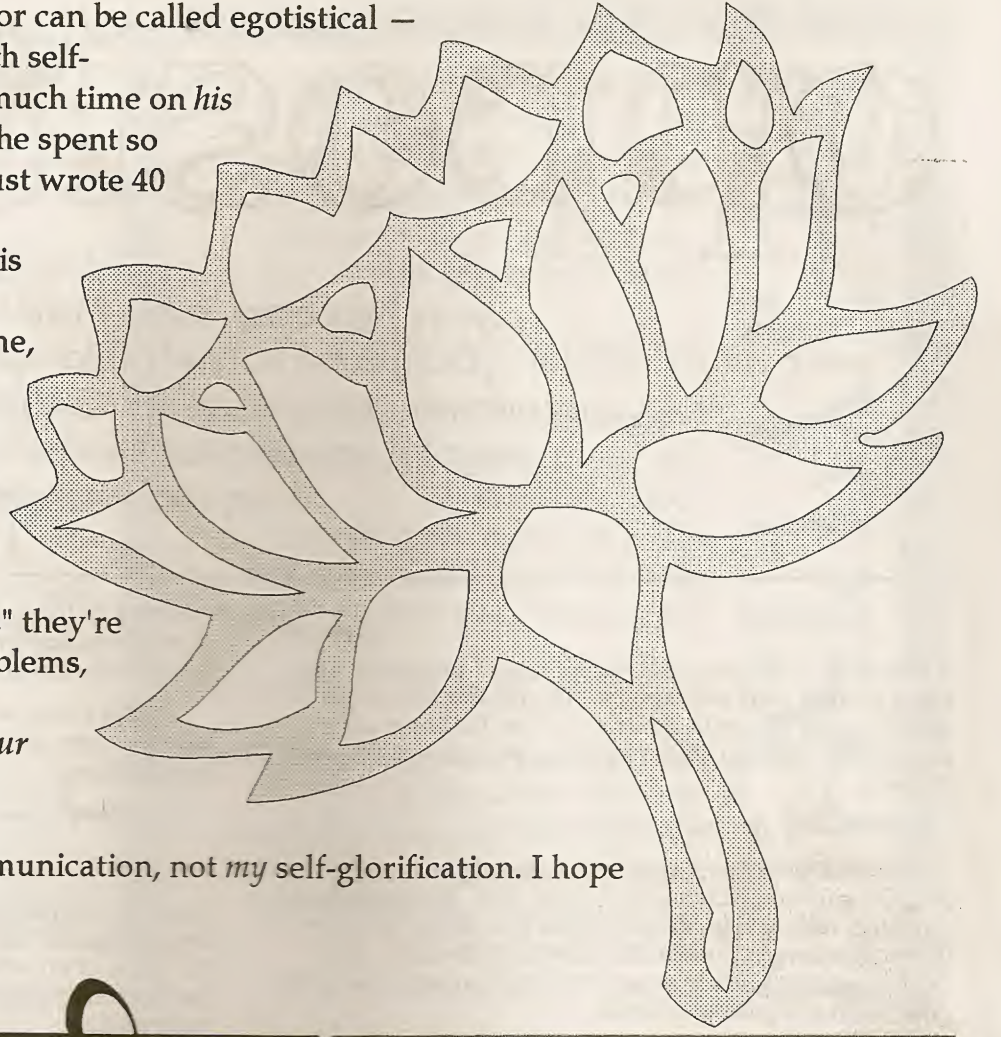


It seems that *any* artistic endeavor can be called egotistical — any *any* artist can be blamed with self-absorption. Orwell, he spent so much time on *his* thoughts, *his* books. Beethoven, he spent so much time on *his* songs. And I just wrote 40 pages about myself...

No. It's not about *myself*. 108 is not "my" music -- it's *our* music. "Our" = the band? No. "Our" = me, you, and everyone else who takes part in hearing or making the music. Not just us human beings, the whole universe and the Universal Source as well.

108 is *our* music, not "mine." These 40 pages aren't about "me," they're about *us*. *Our* situations, *our* problems, *our* emotions, *our* opinions, *our* solutions, *our* inspirations, and *our* desperation's.

Its intention is *our* spiritual communication, not *my* self-glorification. I hope you enjoy it.



विरहसंगीता

Sanskrit titles

- songs of separation — *viraha-sangita*
- opposition — *drdha-vrata*; terrible vow
- deathbed — *aham brahmasmi*; i am soul
- noonenomore — *sunyatma-nirbandha*;
liberation from the void-self
- Son of Nanda — *Nanda-nandana*
- woman — *laxmi-sandesa*; message of the Goddess of Fortune
- shun the mask — *ahankara-projjhita*; rejecting the false-self
- thorn — *maitunya*; sex
- solitary — *viraha-bandha*; chains of loneliness
- i am not — *naham-asmi*
- weapon — *sabdastra*; weapon of transcendental sound
- Govinda-virahena - separation from Govinda
- hostage:i — *ahankara-bandha*; prisoner of ego
- request denied — *vyavasayatmika-buddhir*;
unwavering determination
- pale — *hrdoya-durbalyam*; weakheart



Opposition

your hypocrisy, suave brutality
your empty religion, your proud hollow philosophy
consumerism, thrice daily cannibalism
your TV, your constant sexuality
i oppose vehemently
i vow.



lyrics::

A thin cloth of niceness veils the vile face of barbarism. The pretty grocery store packages, so colorful and nice on the outside -- and the death inside, rent from the bones of the slaughtered. Thrice daily cannibalism; breakfast, lunch, and dinner.

This is suave brutality. This is hypocrisy.

Another pretty package of righteous niceness: empty religion, gift-wrapped in talk of peace, love, and compassion - and the death inside: all bloody war and eternal fire upon the "non-believer." Fanatic. You have no knowledge of the creed-less unity of souls. Brutal animosity lurks behind your pious cloth and good-sam smile.

I, the hollow philosopher, condemn the empty religionist. I point fingers at those who point fingers. I follow those who don't follow the "sheepish followers." I am an infinite regress of hypocrisy. I sit on the throne of my mind, and accept the worship offered by my own thoughts. I weave the fabric of many colorful words into an elaborate blanket. Wrapped tightly, it protects me from the cold. It insulates me from the real world. *It hides me from my insignificant smallness before the Almighty God.*

It is an atrocity so abstrusely ingrained. For example: consumerism. Multicolored toy store, tickle me pink as you kill me inside. 14 cinema concentration camp. Violence to the soul I consider the worst brutality.

How did it get so ingrained? "O TV, take my virgin mind. Control me. Dominate me. Do with me as You like. I hold the console, but You push the buttons of my remote control mind." May I submit one statement; it is not at all false, but is full of meaning. It is this: TV is the brainwash; the Technicolor, wide screen, surround-sound rape of your brutalized mind.

Rape? Yes -- on every billboard, in every ad, commercial, and song. Constant sexuality. Everyone an object. Everyone

exploited by those who pretend to be against sex crimes, who pretend to stand for equality and liberty. *Hypocrisy!*

Today I cease to look the other way. Today I spit a thousand fires of hatred upon your brutal sham. Today I exit your "culture."

I resist. I refuse. I defy...or else I die trying.

music::

The open, relentless chords tell of relentless determination to struggle against our culture of brutality. The intro scream is the sound of my vehement opposition and furious indignation, brought on by realization of my life-long victimization.

The feedback and drone note in the background (made by tuning and de-tuning the high "e" string) is the haunting, looming enemy, stalking me on every street corner, on every channel of every TV, on every magazine stand, in every school and every building...But at the end the string is completely unwound: signaling the downfall of the enemy.



lyrics::

I remember my grandfather. I was pretty young when he died (the exact age escapes me). He was so cool. There was nothing I didn't like about him. He was fun; nice to people -- and he ate & drank with gusto. He even made his own Italian wine in the basement.

Okay, he drank a bit much -- but I didn't care, I loved him.

It was Christmas time when the phone rang and my mother started crying, down the hall. We drove twenty minutes to Grandma's house in Deer Park -- where Grandma was flipping. Everything was hellish.

The ambulance already left -- he was in the hospital.

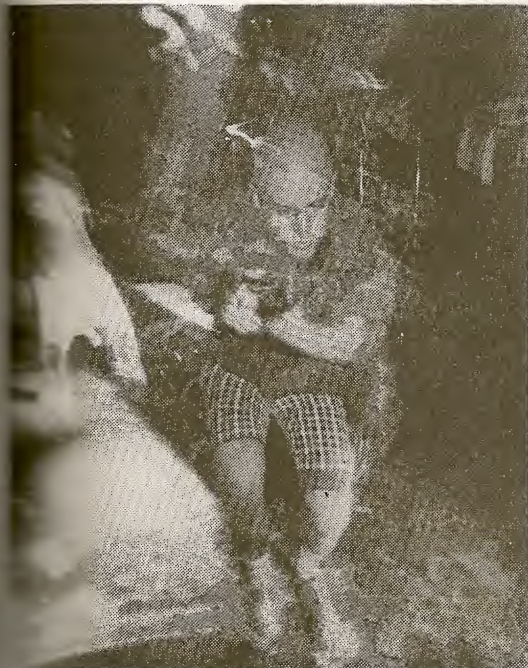
In the waiting room I was waiting with stupid, ugly, numb waiting-room-magazines. Waiting. Waiting. Then a nurse led us down the hall. A white doctor's office. "I'm sorry..." he said.

I was young, but old enough to feel.

and the Long Island funeral home (no, was it Long Island? Yes, but not Holbrook...). I have pictures from those days. My face was a lot less angry then; soft, round, and pretty innocent. In some ways I kinda miss it. I was a small boy dressed in a black suit with a headache -- dizzy as I stood before his coffin, and looked in.

There was only motionlessness, and the make-up I wish they'd never put on.

I returned to my seat remembering the way he gave everyone funny Italian nicknames. Such a loud, playful voice those lips once spoke. Such deep emotionality that mouth once laughed.



But now there was only motionlessness.

Those eyes once cried. But now there was only motionlessness.

Motionlessness.

The same jet black, greased back hair; the same big nose;

i remember when you cried with your eyes on fire with the gale in your lungs screamed your throat red but now it's getting colder... what happened to you?

you're on your deathbed

i remember when you laughed with the sunlight on your lips sun rising high on your early morning smile but you're not waking up this time breathless cries over lifeless eyes

your body is here, but you're not

that thing that screamed with me & dreamed with me that thing that laughed with me & cried with me that same thing lies before me on this deathbed but where are you?

you're not on your deathbed.

the same

callused hands of a furniture builder -- The same person I loved. The same. The same. The same.

But so different.

Your body was there, but you were not. Your body was *right there*, but *you* were not...he is not...I am not...

...this body.

The funeral is long finished, but your lesson will not be forgotten, Grandpa.

music::

The quiet sections are the thoughts sung within my internal mind. The loud parts portray the heaviness of the external situation at the hospital and funeral. Experiencing all this, I drifted from internal questions to external reality. The quiet and loud parts alternate in the same way.

The break part is me sitting at the funeral, as the intense truth gradually entered my head -- quiet at first, then bouncing off the walls of my mind.

The ending riff is my promise not to forget his lesson.

no one no more

invested your identity
into a world that raped you of your entity
projected personality onto a world less individuality
i look in your eyes and i see no one
i look deep into your eyes: no one
no one no more

my color and my fire
sapped by the external objects i desire
i drown in my melodrama
while my soul leaks out the cracks
i looked in my eyes and i saw no one
i stared a mile into my smile: no one

i know i'm someone, and i know
that there is something more. i
know your world is nothing,
nothing. nothing in it
for me anymore. i turn my back
on your corpse hearted "reality."
i walk right out that door.
i disaccept your nothingness.
i am your no-one no more
i'm not your no one i am His someone.



Like you, I didn't notice the internal poverty. But the first time I really saw New York City, I cried so hard. I *noticed*. The day I first looked into your eyes -- the day I fell into your empty, painful eyes.

You fool. You should have turned on the TV. You should have said something funny. You should have taken me to the movies, or something, *anything*. Anything.

But you let me see your eyes.

I went home and stood before the bathroom mirror, frozen stiff. I saw the pale white ghost of my neglected entity, her color and fire sucked and bled into the costume identity strapped around my face. I saw the eyes, the smile, the personality -- the emptiness, the poverty. The no one.

I am your no one no more.

music::

The fast parts express the world's break-neck pace. Things get so hectic and happen so fast. We struggle just to keep up. We have no time to look

lyrics::

I grew up on Gainsborough rd. in Holbrook, Long Island -- where everyone wanted a nice front lawn, a swimming pool with a slide, and powerful air-conditioning (and Atari, don't forget the Atari).

Once, I lost something in that neighborhood. Perhaps it was in the corner of the garage, at the bottom of a heap of forgotten plans. Perhaps it was in the crevice of one of those couch-modules in the family room...*Somewhere*, hidden at 70 Gainsborough Rd, was the dusty dime of my forgotten self.

I thus grew up penniless amid the hollow ring of "life."

Of course, I tried to fit in. I tried to walk a certain way, dress a certain way, tell the right jokes, make fun of the right people, listen to the right music, etc. I invested my identity in the hands of the media, in the hands of "Cinema 14," in the hands of school yearbooks. I invested in a world of objects.

I thus grew up penniless amid the hollow ring of "life."

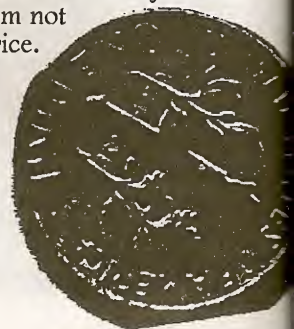
each other in the eye. We have no time to ask why.

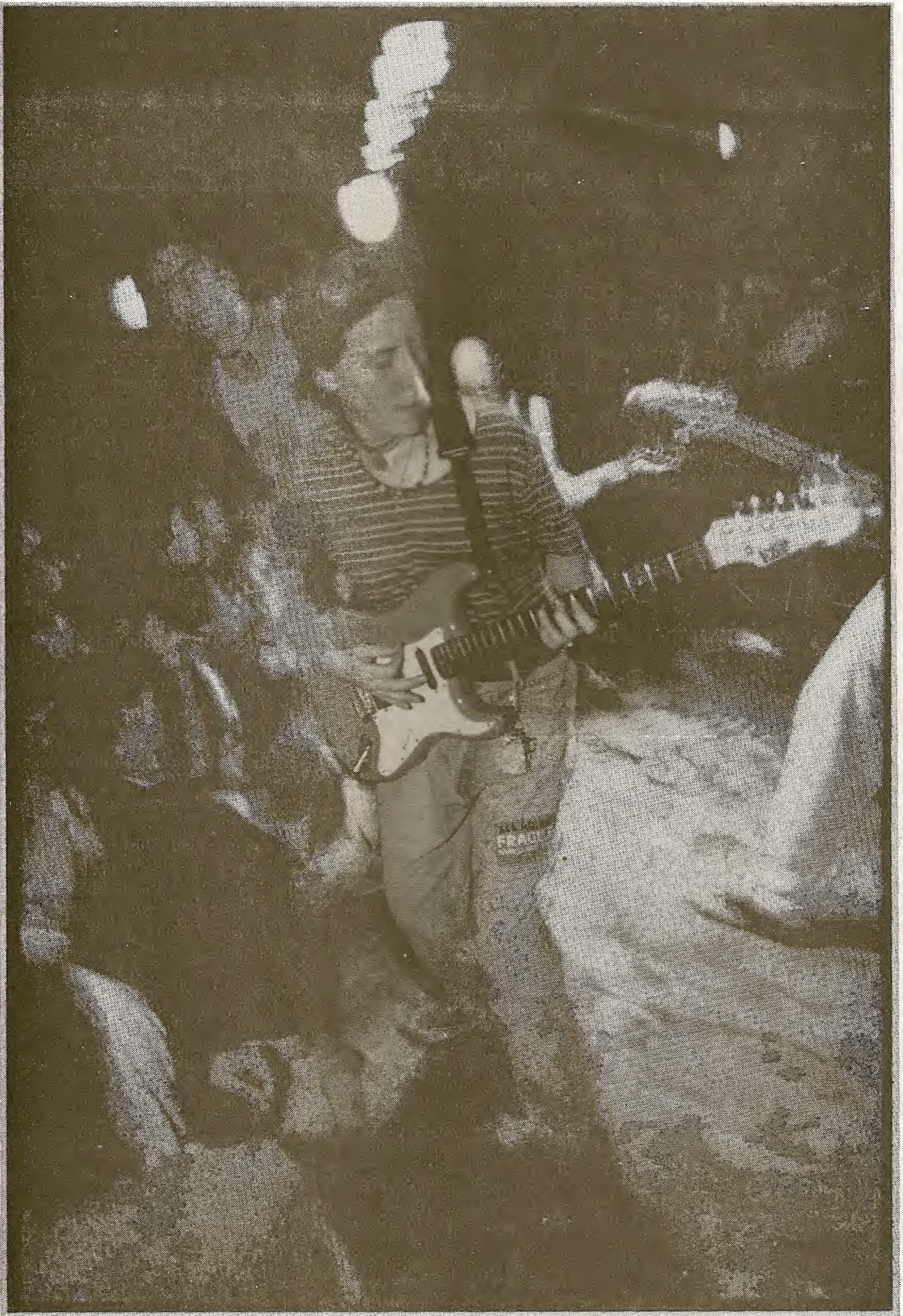
The power chords in the "no-one-no-more"-chorus try to punch a hole through the fast paced, high pitched daze. They are the effort to live, the will to try; try to break out, and reclaim my forgotten me.

The '88 mosh part is the victory. The fast pace defeated. There is nothing but determination, growing until the end.

I will not thirst for life draining objects. I will not quest for soul-killing goals. I will not live in a "reality" as alive as the heart of a corpse. What is so great in this world that I should buy it at the cost of my very self? I am not prepared to pay that price. I am not convinced anymore.

I will regain me. I am part and parcel of the Supreme. I'm not their no one -- I am His someone.





both in the day and in the night
 i remain sleepless
 suffering the pain
 of the loss and gain
 for a fraction of a smile
 i'll suffer the trail
 of a million mindless misers
 they call themselves my boss
 what's the price of the lifestyle?
 9-to-5 in jail is the cost

my game of life totters on the brink
 like a water-drop, perched
 on an eyelash blink
 oh yeah, it's all gonna end
 and all my styles and profiles
 for safety and security
 what are they gonna do
 for me now?

*bhajahu re mana
 shree nanda-nandana
 abhaya caran-aravinda re*

i've had too much of chasing dreams
 that were all built on emptiness
 and i've felt the cold brunt
 of your bottomlessness
 so now i say to everyone i meet:
 worship the Son of Nanda sweet,
 and become fearless."

Lyrics I::

Once, a devotee from Salt Lake City suggested we take our lyrics from songs written by great devotees over the centuries. I hated the idea.

A few years later, I fell in love with an old song written in a language called Bengali. I really wanted 108 to cover it. I know, I know -- I'm supposed to hate the idea of using "someone else's" lyrics. But who cares; I can relate to these lyrics as much as any that I've ever written. I paraphrased a translation and called it: "Son of Nanda."

Nanda is the chief of the cowherd village called Vrindaban. Krishna is his son.

English turns out to be a pretty clumsy language for expressing spiritual emotion, especially compared to Bengali (a Sanskrit derivative), and it was a little difficult to translate some of the words. For example, "so I say to everyone I meet, worship the Son of Nanda sweet; and become fearless;" "worship" can have a bitter edge to it. The Bengali word is *bhaja*, which means "worship" -- but not in the sense of going to Church, doing Rituals, being a snobby Goodie-Two-Shoes, etc. *Bhaja* really means "worship" in the sense of a spontaneous, intimate loving emotion exchanged between soul and Supersoul. Yet how could I translate that into a song? "So I say to everyone I meet, exchange a spontaneous, intimate loving emotion of the soul to Supersoul with the Son of Nanda sweet"???

Not exactly.

I had to settle for "worship," but tried to melt the bitter edge by adding the word *sweet* ("Worship the Son of Nanda sweet"). This caused yet another difficulty. The Bengali word is *carana*, which means "feet," not "sweet." It's supposed to be "worship the Son of Nanda's feet."

Yet using the word "feet" would raise a further problem: "What's the deal with all this foot stuff?"¹ So I opted for "sweet," hoping to counteract any altar-boy connotations brought up by "worship."

In the middle of the song, Kate sings in Bengali. The original poetry was so beautiful. I wanted to keep some of it. The translation of that part is: "Ah! my mind, become fearless by adoring the Son of Nanda's lotus feet."



Lyrics II:

Neither day or night
 grants release from
 work and worry. I
 suffer the material
 pangs with acute tactility. I must kiss up to
 misers and jerks (bosses and teachers) just
 to acquire the paper money and paper
 diploma necessary for the unnecessary

SON
 OF
 Nanda

necessities of my lifeless lifestyle. It is a great humiliation for a fraction of a smile. A *fraction*.

My life is a water-drop hanging on the tip of an eyelash. Yet I labor so profusely to ornament that precious drop, although it will fall into the ocean of nothingness within the breadth of a moment.

Who will notice my causal style, my hard profile, my "impressive portfolio," when the starving hollows of oblivion devour the days of my life? I hid behind my image. I hid behind my scene. Where will I hide when oblivion consumes all, and death stares me down?

Fear.

Society advises my to bury my head in the sands of their vacant, bottomless dreams and goals -- thus to hang by a filament above abysmal meaninglessness. Have a cocktail. Smile for dear life.

I don't want to walk that tight-rope.

So I say bye-bye. I disinherit their fears when I disinherit their desires. I don't follow the instructions they broadcast on TV, and post on the billboards. I follow my own soul, who loves to love the Son of Nanda.

music::

I am the off-beat oddball riff who walks down city streets unable to relate to it all, feeling way out of place.

The break section (with Kate singing) is a release from the material world. It makes me feel at home with my soul and the sweet Bengali poetry.

What does the music "represent?" Sometimes it seems a little artificial to squeeze it all into English -- but then, that's the cool thing about the language of music: it says things that words can't. Just listen to it.

¹"Lotus feet?" If you love and respect even someone's foot (which is their lowliest part), that indirectly says how incrediably much you love and respect everything else about the person.

There's many meanings of the phrase "lotus feet." Here's one: The lotus is a magnificent flower that grows in the middle of lakes. It's leaves and petals have a waxy coating, so even in the middle of a lake, the lotus is untouched by water. Similarly, even when Krishna appears in the material world he is untouched by material qualities.



woman

did you really fall for this again? did you
believe that he was a man? did you think there
was something real in the things we've said
just to be a lord over you (in bed)

he'll tell you everything you'll ever want to
hear. 'cause he wants to be your Most Dear.
he wants to be the reason for your tear; & the
music that's playing in your ear. he wants to be
your Reservoir of Pleasure; & wants to be your
Heart's Only Treasure. your Everything, your
Onlything. your God, he want's to be your God
imitation God ~ i am your ~ imitation God

how far will you fall for it?
how far will you fall.

He is the only "he"
what you see in me, that's a falsity
Govindam adi-purusham tam aham bhajami

this ain't no song of flattery. i'm pointing out
our stupidity. dumb femininity
& dumb masculinity. think about it.
did you dream you were more than his trophy?
did you dream you were more than his trophy?
but sex turns you to dirt, a non-entity
sex turns you (*us*) to stone
and that's reality.

lyrics::

I'll tell you one thing: I'm not even psyched to write
about this song. You know why? I feel like it's an
impossible task.

First, I'm afraid that most people won't even get
past the title before jumping to their conclusion.
Second: Once past the title, the subject itself is so
touchy. Can I carry this message through the mine-
field of your heart without getting blown up by some

sensitive word or bad connotation? Third: This
song deals with the most deep

rooted and cherished illusion of them all --
so even if I manage to survive the mine field
and present the message, will the reader be
brave enough to face it?

I feel the odds are against me.

Your cooperation will be much-
appreciated.

The last verse points out that the song is
neither feminist nor macho, nor is it an
attempt to win popularity votes by flattering
people with politically correct flower-words.

He is the only "he." He (Krishna) is the only
"he" (male). The "men" of this world are just
imitations of Him.

Now, when I say, "Krishna is masculine,"
that opens up a lot of room for
misunderstanding. It's really a complex subject
— but I'll try to explain it the best I can.

Obviously I can't put limiting concepts like
male or female on the Supreme, Unlimited
Being. Krishna is an unlimited spiritual
personality, completely beyond all the labels
and limits of this material existence. Krishna
has no gender at all resembling the totally
limiting male and female identities of our daily
experience.

God's personality is transcendental. It is
not material personality. Material personality
is limited: if I'm white I'm not black, If I'm a
man I'm not a woman. God's spiritual
personality, however, is unlimited. All varieties
of personality exist simultaneously and in
infinite fullness within God.

Krishna is the supreme transcendental
masculine personality (He with a capital "H").
Simultaneously, Krishna's internal pleasure-
potency is the supreme transcendental
feminine personality, His Female counterpart,
whose name is "Radharani" (She with a capital
"S").

Krishna is the only person whose pure
masculinity is completely free from any demeaning,
domineering, or ego-ist aftertaste. He is our real
treasure, our reservoir of pleasure. He is the real
focus of our hearts, thoughts and emotions. The soul
is, in an important sense, eternally feminine in
relation to Krishna. To deny this and imitate Krishna's
position is the essence of ignorance.

The more we bluff & fall for the bluff of

"manhood," the further we fall from our original beauty. The beautiful spirit-soul becomes a stone, an object -- a material body. Our eternal freewill becomes a behavior pattern ingrained on billboards and TV. ("How far will you fall for it? That's how far you fall.")

"Being a man" means imitating Krishna. "Being a woman" means settling for an imitation. Both are dumb.

Trying to attract the opposite sex is essentially a declaration of

ignorance. It is the most pathetic sell-out humanly possible; the pinnacle of embarrassment and humiliation for the self. If we want to get out this awkward ignorance, we must revive our spiritual femininity -- by practicing chastity and exclusive devotion to Radha and Krishna.

Of course, most people think that "chastity" is an absurd relic -- and that a woman who gets involved in Krishna consciousness is either gullible, crazy, or both.

You're *supposed* to think that way. You're supposed to laugh at words like "chastity." It keeps things the way they are. It keeps you available for exploitation.

I don't think chastity is at all archaic. It is true defiance, applied with deep intelligence. When coupled with Krishna consciousness, it empowers a woman to exit the dominion of imitation men and become a liberated soul -- instead of a trophy, dirt, or stone...instead of a doll.¹

music::

In case you didn't notice, this song is pretty heavy metal. I think the gigantic MTV heavy metal rocker scene epitomizes the whole imitation-man thing. I wanted to write a song reminiscent of their style that would be totally opposite of what they stand for.

The abrupt ending is my oath to leave the lie behind and move on.

For more information see Srimad-Bhagavatam (Canto Five, Chapter 18, texts 16-20) and "spiritual femininity" article in Krsna Grrrl fanzine, #1.

In support of the philosophy expressed in this song, the phrase *Govindam adi-purusam tam aham bhajami* is quoted from a Vedic book called *Brahma-samhita*.



tear tears through my eye
a screaming struggle
to shun the shallow me
the calculated "i"
to penetrate the pretense
of this plastic life

hard?
yes it's hard
(what did you expect?)
easy life = easy lie

crackerjack smile is cracked
i spy the lie, decry the lie jack
tragic trace:
tear etching scars your
caked on clown face

i shun the mask
i'll never put it back.

shun the mask



lyrics::

Yes, sometimes it's hard to be a devotee. Yes, I have material desires and they can beat down on me like hammers pounding an anvil. Yes, sometimes I want to give up and hide.

But I won't.

I may have to bite my bleeding lip. I may have to scream in agony. I may have to cry into my own hands for hours without rest -- it's better than a two story lie in the suburbs.

Friends are dying. Relatives are dying. Life is crumbling. Old age is coming -- still you mouth the words "I'm fine." You take the smile-prize out of the crackerjack box and tattoo it on your face. Happy. Happy. Happy.

Your plastic happiness.

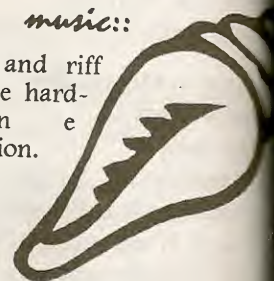
I see through it. I'm no guru; I'm no superman; I'm no prophet or savior or sage -- But I can see through you.

You thought no one was looking but I was looking. You thought one saw, but I saw. That painful welled from your worried carving a riverbed scar in landscape of your clown face.

You were beautiful underneath it. Yes, it's painful to shun the mask, it's more painful to wear it. Worst all is to see you strap it on -- because I love you.

music::

The beat and riff
bespeak the hard-
l i n e
determination.



Thorn

chew the thorn
drink the blood
call it pleasure
"quench that thirst"

sex is suffering
bleed the envy
bleed the jealousy
bleed the heartache
call it pleasure
chew the thorn

i won't.

lyrics::

These are crazy, fanatical lyrics, so let me tell you a crazy, fanatical story...

A camel plods through the desert, far astray from the lands of abundant waters. He wants to slake his parched throat and gulp down cool, pleasurable water. Yet there is only hot sand beneath his feet -- no water in sight.

He finds the nearest bramble-branch and wraps his lips around the biggest, sharpest, and most inviting thorn it has to offer. He breaks it off.

He chews.

The thorn slices his tongue -- as eyes stare blindly, as jaws move rhythmically, and blood wells up in his mouth.

He hardly notices the pain. He is all anticipation. He is all expectation. He is all wrapped up in the wonderful pleasure about to come...

...when he swallows. THE SENSATION. "Quench" that thirst.

I plod through this desert world, far astray from the lands of abundant waters. I want to slake my parched throat, and gulp down cool waters-of-pleasure. Yet there is only the hot sand of reality beneath my feet -- no water in sight.

I find the nearest bramble-brush of material happiness. With wide, hopeful eyes I scan the variety of thorns available, then wrap my lips around the biggest, sharpest, and most inviting one of them all: sexuality.

I chew.

The thorn slices my tongue -- as eyes stare blindly, as jaws move rhythmically, and blood wells up in my mouth.

I hardly notice the pain. I am all anticipation. I am all expectation. I am all wrapped up in the wonderful pleasure about to come....

You obnoxious fanatic! Don't point out the bleeding wounds. Don't point out the de-humanization. Don't point out the objectification. Don't point out the envy, the jealousy, the madness in society. Shut up and be gone! Don't hand me your tall tales of "painless pleasure." Don't tell me your spiritual fantasy of "real water." This blood shall satisfy me. This blood is full in my mouth. I am all anticipation. I am all expectation. I am all wrapped up in the wonderful pleasure about to come...

...When I swallow. THE SENSATION. "Quench" that thirst.

No. The thirst is not quenched. I will die in the dehydrated desert. Alone. Barren.

music::

Again and again, and again and again,
and again we chew -- although none of
us wants the suffering that comes with it.
Habit, it's drilled in the head. Repeated. Repeated.
Repeated.

The repetition in the music and lyrics reflect that.

The solo is sad, and I'm happy about that, because this subject makes me sad, and I don't want to write about it anymore.

solitary

condemned cell incarcerates me
no walls, no bars on this cage
it's just "me"
the penitentiary is my "identity"
in this solitary
i learn what it's like to be so

alone

crouched in a lonesome corner i shiver
head faced to the wall
my eyes glued to the mirror
masculinity
beats the living hell out of me
vanity is my only reality
my cold companion

each moment without You i die
each moment without You i die
each moment without You i die
oh Krishna.



lyrics::

I am incarcerated; never able to be the person I really want to be; never able to say the things I really want to say; never able to live the life I really want to live. I am imprisoned.

I am the prison.

It is a penitentiary built of my own self-image. No concrete walls hold me. No steel bars cage me. I am the warden. I slammed the door. I turned the key. No one holds me down;

I hold me down.

Hypnotized by my reflection in the mirror, like a mouse in a trap -- starring. It glues me to the crumpled corner of my gray cell. It keeps me here, locked up in a fortress of myself...the loneliest place in the world.

Krishna, who are You? Where are You? I can't take my eyes off myself long enough to catch a glimpse. Why do I linger in this hard cell, while the guards called "masculinity" beat me to tears and embarrass me senseless?

There is no air left to breathe.

Εαξη μομεντ ωιτηρου Ψου Ι διε.
Εαξη μομεντ ωιτηρου Ψου Ι διε.
Εαξη μομεντ ωιτηρου Ψου Ι διε.

ο *Krishna*.

music::

The main riff paints a picture of my sadness; loneliness, deep loneliness. Not the kind that can be relieved by "hanging out." *My* loneliness. Do you understand? *Can* you understand? Do you dare to understand it, within yourself?

It's all mixed with insanity. I don't know if you feel it -- but when I listen to this riff, I get images of padded cells and stuff like that; especially when you combine it with the hypnotic bass line and whispered psychopathic vocal track that Orsen Wells came down and did for us.

lyrics::

Krishna consciousness is something very real, and has an incredible potential to offer to the world -- please don't delay the process by saying things about people and ideas you don't even know much about.

I am not a "conformist." I am not a "religious" person. I am not a "fanatic." I am not an "institution." I am not "homophobic." I am not "sexist."

Krishna consciousness is not what you think it is. I am not who you think I am. Why don't we both learn to see each other as individuals, and be friends.¹

music::

I want to write something big and metaphysical, but all I can say is that I went to see Fugazzi in St. Louis, and when the show was over I sat down and wrote this song. Pretty mundane huh? Oh well.

This was one of those songs where the music came first. Truthfully, almost all the songs are like that. I usually get a general feeling or idea for a song, and then some music pops out to fit that emotion. Once the music is there, I can carve out the exact words to make the emotions and idea's concrete and specific.

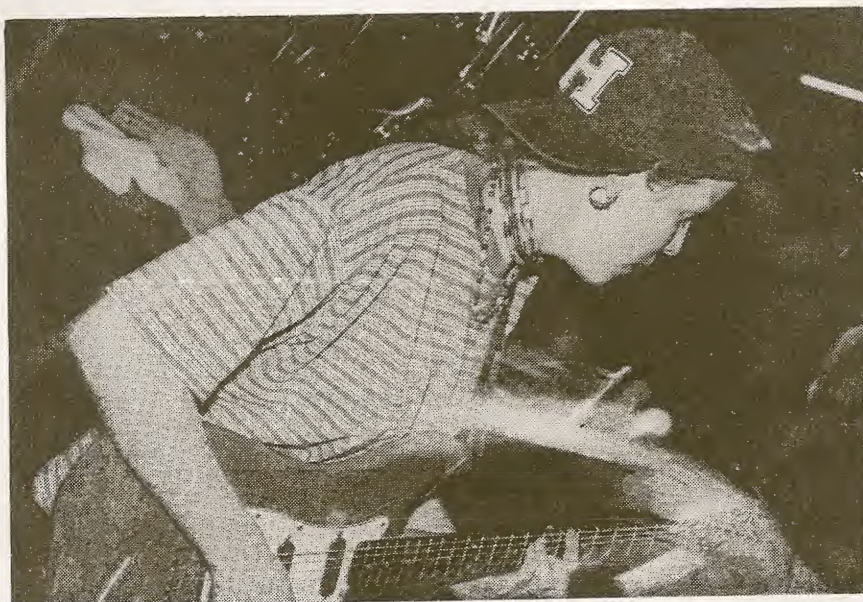
Still nothing metaphysical to say...Oh yeah, "You're not that body, Prabhu."

¹"obscuration" is a new word. It means the act of making obscure.



you try, you try to shoot me down
your mouth is like a loaded gun
a million cries of a billion lies
that's your ammunition
misconception
dissemination of false information
stereotyped perceptions

but i, but i am not as you portray me
the pictures you paint of my face
the images don't convey me
obscuration
the confusion you usher in
prolongs this dark age's
ignorant duration.



lyrics::

My friend still thinks spirituality is of utmost concern, but politics is more important to him right now. Without a stable socio-political base, he says, people won't be able to appreciate higher things like spirituality. If someone's poor, hungry, and oppressed, they're not going to even think about spirituality, they'll be thinking about how to get money, bread, and revenge. So right now, he says, the most important thing is to clean up the socio-political scene, *then* people will be ready to seriously take to spirituality.

Yet the poor, hungry, and oppressed are notoriously more interested in spirituality than those who are "well situated" in society. That's a historical fact, and it throws a monkey wrench in his thesis.

But let's skip it and just pretend, for the sake of discussion, that it *is* true: I *do* have to be "well situated" before I can appreciate spirituality. OK, now how you gonna do it? How you gonna to "situate" me? How you gonna get me out of poverty, hunger, and oppression? What's the plan?

"Power comes from the barrel of a loaded gun?" I really don't believe that the power from the barrel of a loaded gun is going to make everyone treat each other like human beings. I really don't believe that the power from the barrel of a loaded gun will make things conducive for mass appreciation of higher things, like spirituality.

"Take the power back?" You can change the social structure till your blue in the face, but without the heart being changed you won't do nothing but re-arrange the deranged situation of human exploitation.

He might respond, "Your 'spiritual revolution' just isn't practical! The verses of Bhagavada-Gita can't fill the stomachs of the hungry. Poverty, oppression...these are very real problems that have to be dealt with immediately."

I certainly agree, but I really don't think petition-signatures and white house marches will do the trick. We *do* need to solve the real problems first -- but how?

To understand the solution we first must understand the problem. What *causes* all the ugliness in society? Spiritual blindness causes unfair distribution of wealth. Spiritual blindness causes unfair distribution of food. Spiritual blindness

causes unfair distribution of housing. Spiritual blindness causes devaluation of "minority" cultures. Spiritual blindness causes exploitation and manipulation. Spiritual blindness causes physical, mental and emotional violence.

What *causes* all the ugliness in society? The cataract in the spiritual eyes of the leaders of society. It is a spiritual problem. It requires a spiritual solution.

A real revolution must be more than a superficial change of ink in a lawbook or flags on a pole. It must go deep into the hearts of the people, removing the spiritual cataract. Knowledge amputates the cataract of ignorance. In that sense, the verses of Bhagavada-Gita *can* put food in the mouths of the hungry and shelter the cold.

He may still protest, "You can't just sit around and chant 'om'" while a bunch of fascists smash your friend's head in with a bat." I have to agree. That's why there are hardened *ksatriya*-warriors in Vedic society. You need *both* political and spiritual activism. Political activism by itself is a time-tested failure, but when married with spiritual knowledge it becomes enormously effective and powerful.

Spirituality is the most essential ingredient in any social or political improvement.

This is the real grass-roots rebellion. The weapon of this revolution is not the barrel of a gun. The ammunition is not a bullet. It is a song:

this is the weapon of real revolution
this is the fire of the final rebellion
this is the weapon of the real revolutionary
this is the fire
politics? that ain't gonna solve this
sociologist, your plan is useless
this is the fire of the final rebellion
this is the weapon

*without the heart being changed
you won't do nothing but re-arrange
the deranged situation
of human exploitation.
and that is why i imply:*

this is the weapon of the real revolution
unlock the coils the clamped around you
around your spiritual frame
by crying out the Holyname.

weapon

*Hare Krishna, Hare Krishna, Krishna Krishna,
Hare Hare. Hare Rama, Hare Rama, Rama
Rama, Hare Hare.*

music:

The beat has a kind of "revolution-march" feel to it. The solo sings a picture of the chaotic attempts of material politics and sociology to deal with the problems of the world. The bass and drums keep laying down the same march even during the chaotic solo, keeping the knowledge and truth of spiritual revolution alive. By their determined effort, they eventually succeed. The solo abruptly halts, and the rebellion theme kicks back in full steam.



'this is the weapon.'



lyrics I::

Even the ant runs towards the picnic crumbs, and away from trampling feet. Even the ant avoids pain, and pursues pleasure. As do I. As do you.

Every action of *everyone* is in search of the pleasure principle.

Search the movies and the late-night hang-outs. Search the channels, the jokes, and the anger. Search the quiet whisper that conjures a tear. Search the blaring music that clenches a fist. Comb the curves of your body, search the erotic...

But the hollow ring in my ear won't subside. I'll search to tears, where nothing can be found.

All I can find are the statues surrounding: the portraits and pictures and trophies stacked high. Biographies, interviews, glories, and ribbons --

diplomas framed proud on the walls of my mind. I can find nothing else in my mansion of ego.

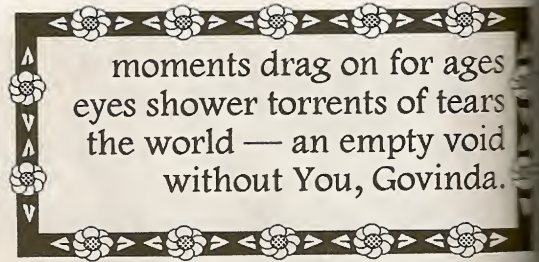
*yugayitam nimisena
chakshusha pravrishayitam
shunya-yitam jagat sarvam
govinda-virahena me*

Alone in my empty home, full of my empty self. I'll search to tears, where nothing can be found.

There is a town full of bliss; there is a world full of life; there is a face full of love (with a flute to His lips) -- but I shall not find them. I am too busy searching old boxes, locked in the attic.

My search is fruitless without Him.

His name is Govinda, my name is empty -- without Him.



lyrics II::

and i'm still by myself
vacant as that doorway
but i won't admit it
i can't admit it — not even to myself

i can't sleep at night
but i'll won't admit
that it's for want of You

i pretend i want something else
i search for it somewhere else
i search so damn hard
where nothing can be found

i search the anger
i search the humor
i search the erotic

but You are not there
You are not there

and i'm still by myself
and i hate myself for it
and i am so full of myself
i am so full of myself

i am so empty.

i am so

empty

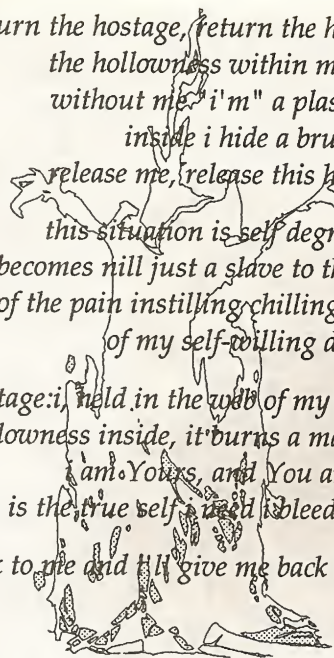
music::

All-right, I admit it: I've been a die hard Doors fan since the age of 11. Now you understand everything!



Govinda — virahena

return the hostage, return the hostage:
 the hollowless within me burns
 without me. "i'm" a plastic hide
 inside i hide a brutal void
 release me, release this hostage:
 this situation is self degradation
 my will becomes nill just a slave to the thrill
 of the pain instilling chilling killing
 of my self-willing devotion
 hostage:i held in the web of my own lie
 the hollowness inside, it burns a man alive
 i am Yours, and You are mine
 and this is the true self i need to find
 give me back to me and I'll give me back to You.



the sculptor, carving elaborate diversions deep into
 shallow outside -- frightful, hollow statue. Dare you
 your eyes upon the void within:?

Child's vacant bed in the silent twilight...Daddy weeps in the
 doorway all night, tears drilling his face. All the joys of the world
 all the breathless, heaving vacuum in his heart. His little girl
 has been stolen.

Sweet girl-soul once played in the room of my
 heart, black braids happily dancing on her shoulders.
 I stand in her soundless and vacant doorway,
 weeping all night. My little girl :: stolen.

Daddy's an artist now, a sculptor; carving, carving, carving --
 to forget the pain, to forget the emptiness. Carve 'unique' thoughts.
 Carve 'unique' words. Carve 'unique' features. Carve 'unique'
 emotions. Carve an "identity." But all the carving in the world can't
 fill the heaving vacuum in his heart.

His little girl has been stolen.

My little girl has been stolen.

Stolen, hostaged, and enslaved by five merciless men: eyes,
 nose, ears, tongue, and touch -- the fifth of five.
 Kidnapped by the world.

Yes, I would like to blame you, but I'm the one to blame.
 I put my signature on the lie of the five. I sold myself to
 their 'unique' thoughts, 'unique' words, 'unique' features,
 'unique' emotions. *i* am the victim, and "I" am the
 criminal.

I surrender, now
 Hero of Vraja.
 Who will read this -- I don't care.
 What they will think of me -- I don't care.
 Falling at Your lotus feet
 weeping and weeping
 I submit this plea:

I am Yours. I am Yours.
 No more lies. No more lies.

Rescue this little girl. Give me back my life. Give me back my
 me.

I am Yours. You are mine.
 No more lies. No more lies.¹

¹Respected reader, when will these words be powerful enough to carry
 the burden of this message through the labyrinth of your mind, and arrive
 at the doorstep of your heart? Dare you look into the empty room within
 you? Dare you touch the cold, forgotten little hand of your own hostaged
 I?



hostage:i

lyrics::

music::

A few mornings ago, I sat on the wooden floor in the 26 2nd Ave. storefront; half chanting Hare Krishna, half looking around. A thin towel covered the glass door. Plywood hid the front display window. A long, narrow glass pane was between them, and it showed a bus stopped at the traffic light outside.

The bus's broadside was dominated by an ad with repeated images of "beautiful," firm, slim, young naked bodies having sex (You live in Manhattan, you get used to it). There was a single word printed across the writhing bodies: "request."

I took out my notebook and wrote the lyrics.

People claw each other like rabid animals, bitten by the foaming dogs of these constant advertisements. They hurt themselves. They hurt each other. They hurt mother earth. Mine is the voice tired of hurting. Mine is the voice that denies the request.

Yet mine is a precarious struggle ("By A Thread"). There is fear of defying both "culture" and "counter-culture." There is fear of the unknown. There is addiction. There is withdrawal. There are the omnipresent spook-boxes brainwashing. It topples my determination, and drags me gradually towards the brink. Yet to give in would be to extinguish my self.

In my head I *know* I must not give in. I know the philosophy. I know the logic...But sometimes that is not enough.

In my heart I *feel* I can not give in. My emotions recoil at the thought...But sometimes even that is not enough.

In my soul, I *will not* give in. With help from my true friends, intellectual and emotional defiance becomes fact. Wavering no more. Drifting no more. Enslaved no more.

I see the billboard not with contempt, but with genuine sympathetic pity. I neither love the request. I neither hate the request. I simply leave it behind, and move forward.

Good-bye.

Kate and I sing the requests of illusion. Rob sings the mind of the soul.

This and "i am not" were the last two songs we wrote before recording. The bass line was born and recorded simultaneously. The vocals penned one day, recorded the next. A little spontaneity is always fun.

The intro riff reminds me of someone falling through vertigo -- slapped around by millions of "requests" rapid fired into his eyes and ears.

The main part of the song is dark. I see myself as a dark person. I am moody within. I can't relate to people who always feel like they always have to show you a smile. I often wonder what they are trying to hide.

There are two kinds of darkness in this song: the sad darkness of myself, and the sinister darkness of the request-world. Kate and I sing the sinister darkness. Rob sings the sad darkness.

As the song proceeds it builds strength, momentum and determination (as do I) to deny and defy the requests of a lie.

"return to madness"
i ponder on your dark embrace
"return to lunacy"
mesmerized, i drift towards the brink
about to extinguish my heart
"return to madness"
i must not accept your relentless request
"return to a world-for-me"
i can not accept your relentless request
i will not i will not i will not i will not
no no no no no
your request is denied
denied.

request
denied





lyrics::

I had been walking barefoot around Sri Mayapur, India for the past 4 days, with my Guru Maharaja and hundreds of other devotees. All day long walking through fields and singing Hare Krishna, stopping

only for gigantic parties: hours and hours of wild chanting and dancing, followed by tremendous feasts...

This would happen at least twice a day, everyday. Forty to sixty year-old devotees would be jumping around like little kids -- smiling and singing and rolling in the dusty sand as if completely stoned; dancing with each other

and cracking everyone up -- for hours on end.

Middle aged people partying down like no tomorrow, twice a day, everyday; without the crutch of drugs, alcohol, or sexuality; barefoot, in India; totally defying all the normal standards of modern culture. My mind was blown.

I mentioned it to my Guru Maharaja. Laughing in the Indian sun, he said, "We're the only ones who made it through. All my friends from the 60's, all the rebels and hippies, they all got regular jobs and families and live boring lives in the suburbs now... Out of all my friends, only the devotees

were able to stick to their philosophy and never give in and become normal like everyone else."

Out of all his friends, only the devotees were able to stick to their philosophy and never give in and become normal like everyone else.

Only the devotees

lyrics II::

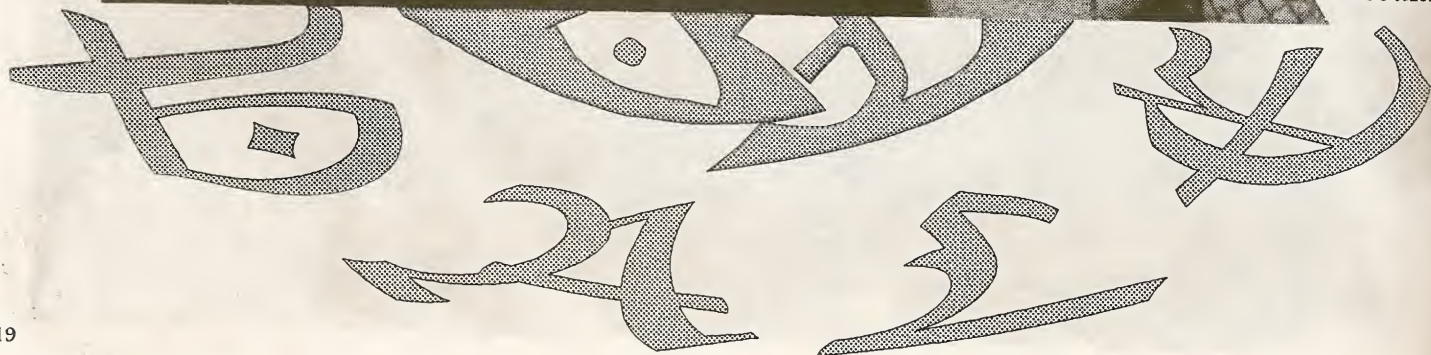
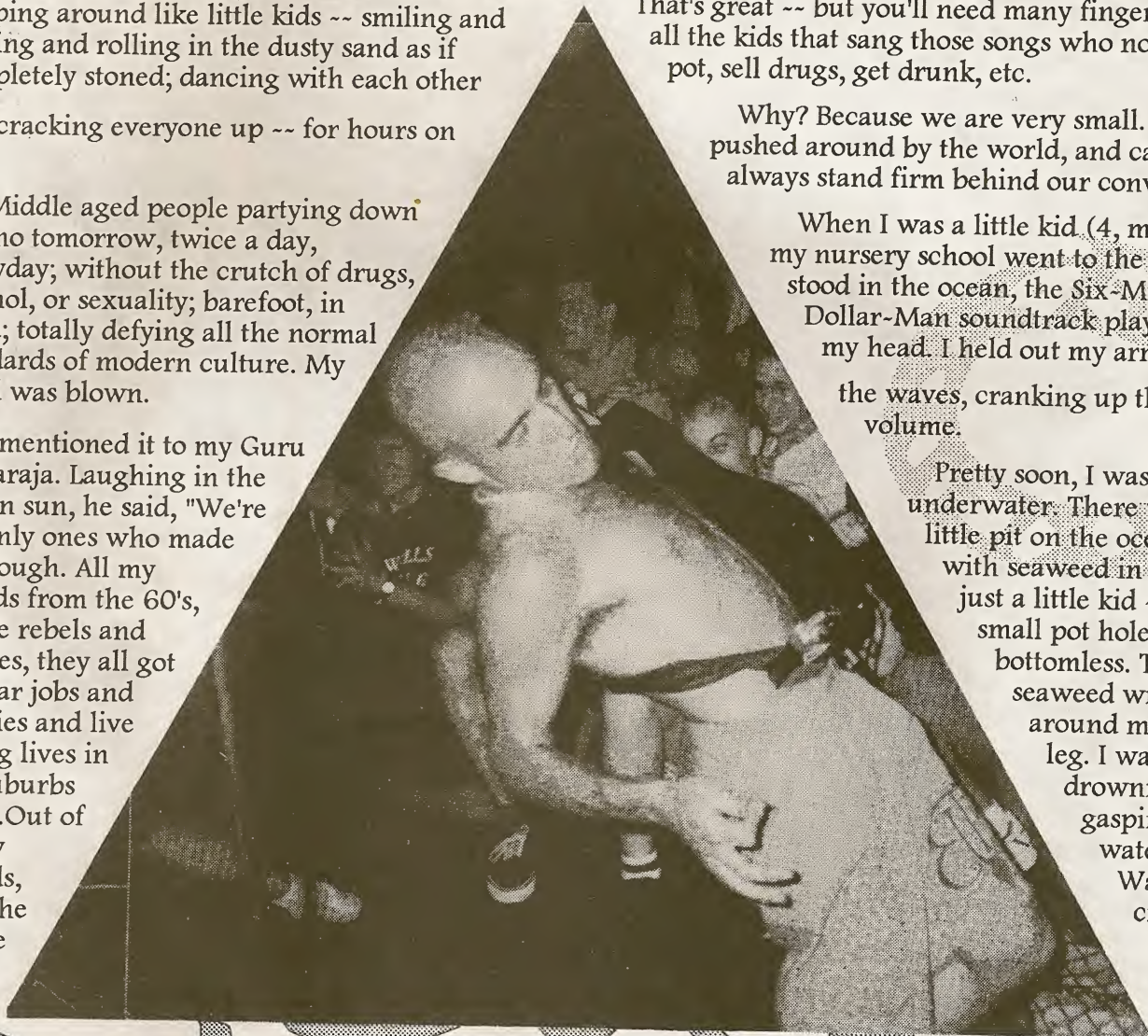
It's natural to want to stand firm behind your convictions for the rest of forever; it's the whole "true till death," "straightedge for life," phenomena. That's great -- but you'll need many fingers to count all the kids that sang those songs who now smoke pot, sell drugs, get drunk, etc.

Why? Because we are very small. We get pushed around by the world, and can't always stand firm behind our convictions.

When I was a little kid (4, maybe 5), my nursery school went to the beach. I stood in the ocean, the Six-Million-Dollar-Man soundtrack playing in my head. I held out my arms to stop

the waves, cranking up the volume.

Pretty soon, I was underwater. There was a little pit on the ocean floor, with seaweed in it. I was just a little kid -- even a small pot hole seemed bottomless. The seaweed wrapped around my right leg. I was frantic, drowning; gasping water. Waves crashed on my head. I could



It's not even
hear the
sound
track
anymore.

One of the
teachers came
and saved my life.

I think everyone has
their own soundtrack
-- either the Six-
Million-Dollar-Man, or
some rap song about how
tuff they are. We stand in
the ocean of this world, with
the outstretched arms of all
our adolescent morality (hippie,
beatnik, straightedge, or
whatever), trying to hold back the
staggering waves of material energy.

Saying "...for life;" as we drown.

Pale is, in a sense, just another
"straight-edge for life" kinda song -- but
the last two lines set it apart: "one path for
me, through destiny -- and I will tread it till
the blood-red end; because I stand in the
shelter of the strength of my Lord, *I stand in the
shelter of the strength of my Lord.*"

A devotee can remain totally out of the
mainstream forever. I'll never get a job. I'll never
join the 9 to 5 march. "I don't want to grow up.
I'm never getting old. Don't want to work from 9 to
5 and drink to stay alive. I'm gonna stay young
until I die." I'll never pay taxes to this stupid
weapon-building government. I'll never even eat in
a restaurant! Out of the mainstream -- out -- not
by my own tiny strength, by the strength of my
Lord.

One of the teachers came and saved my life.

*society, there ain't no sanctuary from popular insanity. or will you just add to the death toll?
your plan to save yourself from the 9 to 5 scam? without a lifelong movement, without a spiritual
(I'm looking at you, with the yawning jaws of normalcy stretched wide beneath your stride. what's*

i stand in the shelter of the strength of my Lord
of the strength of my Lord
because I stand in the shelter
and I will tread it till the blood red end
one path for me through destiny
won't dye my substance pale
time

*subscribes to the norm.)
another friend sinks into the mainstream. another sucker
(i'm watching them all go down. drop like flies. bam.*

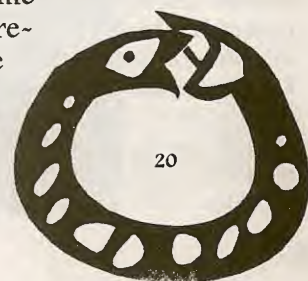
time has died your substance pale
of convenience and compliancy
washed out by the waves
into the ocean of misery
by the current
pulled down
pulled down
down

music

There's a
bass
guitar with
the first and
second strings
tuned down to
"d," played
through two
distortion pedals,
which lays down a
drone behind the
music. There's also a
normal bass, playing a
kick-snare pattern,
hypnotic, slow, and tidal.
The guitar riff is repetitive
and nagging. Together they
generate an undercurrent,
representing the pull of the
mainstream world; broken only by
the break part, where all the
instruments come together and co-
operate to defeat the undertow, to keep
the soul afloat and alive.

All hell breaks loose at the end of the
song. There's a guitar with all strings tuned
to "d" or "a," played with a screwdriver.
Another guitar, played with the side of the pick
stuck in the grooves of the strings, pressing them
down *onto* the pickups. A third element is the
distorted bass, strings unwound and flapping.

This chaos is the sound of final defeat for the
material current. The distorted bass speaks the last
sounds of the gigantic dying monster. Those
monstrous desires within us are transformed into
spiritual emotions. Thus that same
monstrous bass strikes a single re-
tuned note, signifying the peace
and self-satisfaction of the
victorious soul sheltered by the
indefatigable strength of the
lotus feet of Krishna.



Holyname

*i have no emotion i have no devotion
it's empty motion
oceans of notions intent on ego promotion
no elation no devastation
supplication seems a foreign creation
barren and beaten and broken and bruised is the briar-ridden
thorn-land of my heart
my cries are lies on concietful eyes.*

*i won't simmer in this complacency
i won't settle for this false me
- so i cry it out: Holyname, Holyname.*

lyrics::

The material heart is swamped in self-glorification. The spiritual heart is honest. Devotees don't sweep their faults under the rug. They bring them into clear view, pick them up, throw them out the door, and feel relieved.

Humility is not depressing. Humility is not low self-esteem. Humility is a relief, and a reality.

I am supposed to be a devotee of Krishna, that's what people say. It's true, I can go through the body motions, but my heart stands still.

Devotion is supposed to quake the heart. They say that any tiny thing done for Krishna will drench the pure self in a downpour of transcendental emotion -- if motivated by simple love.

What is my motivation?

Oceans of

notions intent on ego promotion. That's why I remain immersed in the monotonous boredom of common material life. No elation, no devastation. - only plastic imitations. cannot laughter and paste-on tears.

The spirit-soul is full of excitement and vibrant color. Dramatic spectrums of emotion that saturate you in waves of ecstasy. Yet for me there's no elation and no devastation -- because my motivation is ego promotion; *not* selfless devotion; *not* simple love.

How can I sincere-ify my motivation? Simple: by



supplication, humble prayer.

HA! That's a good joke. I'm from New York. I'm from America. I'm cool. I'm old-school. his "hard-guy" conditioning has made me so proud and mighty. Supplication seems impossible, like a foreign language -- a foreign creation.

How, then, can the seed of devotion grow in a wasteland heart like mine, cracked dry by the blazing sun of envy, bound and strangled by the tangled thorny briars of jealousy and malice?

Yes, how? I cannot say.

I think I am so great for writing this "humble" song. I am low, for real. Unable to be real, I remain sadly material.

No. I will not simmer in dejected misery. I won't settle for the "cool" false-me. I will change. How? The Holyname. Name by Name by Name...

Crack you, hard heart

Little drops of water wear away the stone

Little drops of the Holyname

Hare Krishna, Hare Krishna, Krishna Krishna, Hare Hare.

Hare Rama, Hare Rama, Rama Rama, Hare Hare.

grow

*grow, but what will have to go?
grow, but who will have to go?*

*you know I gotta grow I gotta yearn I gotta learn
and I got to move ahead.
friendships change = progress made (?)
some things are gonna hafta re-arrange
but does that mean we gonna hafta
"grow" estranged?
i need inspiration
not monotonous degradation.*

*you know I gotta grow I gotta yearn I gotta learn
but don't you feel betrayed
you're not excluded, you're invited
don't feel intimidation from the pushes and the pulls
of the general population
I'll never shut the door, but I've got to search for more.*

lyrics::

"yeah, you got into Krishna -- that's great for you. But don't you even care about all the friends you left behind?"

Of course I do.

There's no justification for claiming that Krishna consciousness is some wicked cult that tears friends and families apart. Interests change -- friends change; it's natural. There's nothing sinister about it. When you get into football, your friends change. When you get into straightedge, your friends change. When you get into *anything*, your friends change -- it's natural.

I still love my parents and my friends. Change is a necessary part of growth, but it needn't make us strangers. Our friendship can grow and change as well -- right?

If not, if our "friendship" stagnates on rude jokes, put-downs, and gossip - what can I do? I can't stand that teenage consciousness anymore. I've got to grow.

I never intended to shut people out of my life by becoming a devotee. If I did, I'm sorry; I really am. I didn't want to

exclude you, but to invite you; mutual growth.

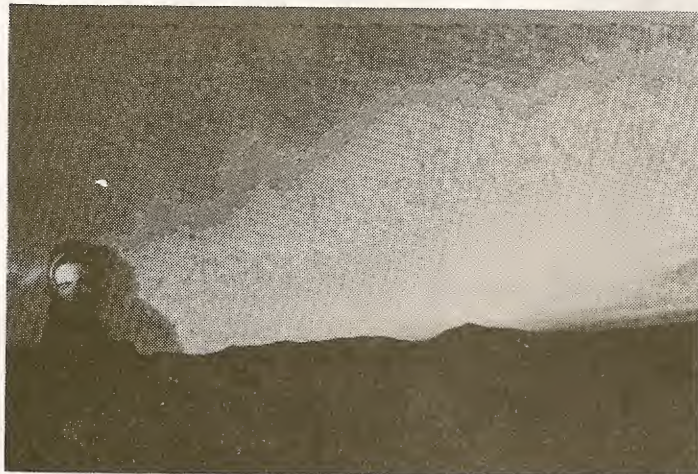
No, I'm not saying, "If you become a Hare Krishna, I'll be your best friend still."

You don't have to shave your head and wear pink bed sheets to be my friend. It's just that, realistically, friendship requires mutual interests -- mutual growth.

I don't think you wanted to accept that invitation. Why not? Did it have something to do with public opinion? The pushes and the pulls of the general population? "If I hang out with him too much, if I agree with him too much, everyone will think. .

Don't think like that. It stinks.

To my friends and family: if our relationship malfunctioned, this is an apology, and an invitation for repair.



thirst

*i, try, to slake my
thirst on desert sands
hot dunes choke my throat
arid and parched
i, try, to slake my
thirst on desert sands
how can I quench my thirst on desert sands?*

*brutal sun burns dry
mirage : mesmerize
oasis = illusion
rigid scorched delusion*

*communication reciprocation
pure infatuation
for these my dry thirst's burning cracked. for*

*Madhava. Madhava. Madhava.
Madhava.*

*brutal sun burns dry
mirage : mesmerize
water of love my thirst demands
mirage = scalding sands*

*communication, reciprocation
pure infatuation
my dry thirst burns and cracks for*

Madhava. Madhava. Madhava. Madhava.



lyrics::

(This seems to be the pre-cursor to *thorn*)

See a thirsty deer on the desert's edge. He sees water in the sand's hot shimmer. See him chase the mirage, always just a few feet ahead. Do you see him running ragged into the middle of a wasteland?

The "water" remains out of reach. The poor animal dies. Did you see him running ragged into the middle of a wasteland? Did you see yourself? Did you see me? I am that deer -- thirsty for newness; thirsty for meaning; thirsty, most of all, for love.

Did you see him run dead into a wasteland? Times repeated, our attempts to love have failed. Times repeated, we have gulped down the mirage and choked on hot sand. Times *again* we will be burned.

Deny the suffering, "It's cool." Keep choking. Keep going -- smack dead in the middle of a wasteland; mesmerized by the mirage; urged ever onward by billboards, friends, "education," TV, music.

Then the day comes when you decline the chase. You have seen the forked tongue, and you know the "oasis" is an illusion.

Angry frustration. Hate the world. Hate it. Kick it. You've been burned too many times. You've been stabbed too many times. Now you *hate*. Now you stab back. Now you hate and hurt back.

Rigid scorched delusion. The poor animal. . . he dies.

Put down your boxing gloves, get out of the pit, and be real. We thirst for *love*. Anarchistic frustration and hatred of the world soothe that thirst. Krishna consciousness = not pretending a mirage is real; not hating the desert; but finding the *real* water and drinking deep. See the mirage for what it is, turn around, get out. Get to real water.

Real water is real *love*. Real love is absolutely free from self-concern. Real love is absolutely void of false-ego. Real love is pure infatuation.

But who? Who can I give my pure infatuation -- without getting scorched again? Anyone who is incomplete in themselves will leech us to suck out a sense of completion. Manipulation will enter and result in pain. Scorch.

Who can I give my pure infatuation? Complete infatuation can only be given to a complete person. That complete person is Madhava - Krishna.

Clear your eyes and see the world; it's a desert. Admit it, turn around, and leave. Leave the thirsty desert and swim in the cool lake of Madhava.

That's the idea behind
108.

What is "idefy" about?

sick of hearing all the "beliefs" you don't really believe in anyway.

It's about people who sit around and make up all kinds of reasons to justify their lazy life. It's about people who say all this stuff against Krishna consciousness, so this way they won't look bad for not really sincerely learning from it and changing their own habitual patterns and safety blankets.

It's a shout out from me, who's sick of giving logical arguments to the illogical. It's not a logical song. It's an emotional song. I'm



Go ahead and make your "comments." I'm not going to stop long enough to bother defending myself. I'll keep my head straight, and power on full bore forward. I leave your gray world, and defy it brazenly.

Amen to that, sister!

What does 108 mean?

It doesn't really "mean" anything. It is a special number which has a lot of different connotations.

There are 108 Vedic books of spiritual philosophy (*Upanishads*). There are 108 chanting beads on a strand. There are 108 principle *gopis* (cowherd girls) in Vrindaban. The *gopis* are the most exalted of all living entities - the supreme devotees of Krishna. Among the 108 *gopis* - Srimati Radharani is #1.

Rig Veda says that the sun is 108 sun-diameters away from the earth, and the moon is 108 moon-diameters away from the earth. These figures are exactly corroborated by modern astronomical measurements. Freaky-flippy and cool.

I got my first real book about Krishna from Alan Cage, who was then the drummer for Beyond. He picked it up from a Cro-Mags show and gave it to me when he saw that I was interested in it. That particular book was called *Sri Isopanishad: Discovering the Original Person*. It was the 108th of the 108 books mentioned above - and it had a very big affect on me (obviously).

There's a 108 zillion other things it means. . .

floating lyrics and ideas and stuff:

108 is an attempt to communicate the full color and richness of spiritual life.

The fascination of rituals, the security of religiosity, the pride of philosophy and knowledge -- it can only last so long; it can only go so deep.

Krishna consciousness is more than all these things. It is a fathomless ocean of unbridled emotion. 108 is an attempt to demonstrate and express even a single drop of that ocean.

108 and Shelter are two *very* different bands. I like it like that. Sometimes people think becoming a devotee means photocopying the personality of a prominent figure and wearing it

like a Halloween costume. Nothing could be more wrong. Keep your personality; it's nice already.

Spiritualize it by engaging it in Krishna's service.

Krishna consciousness is not a one-way street. It encompasses an entire spectrum of outlooks, attitudes, personalities, lifestyles, tastes, etc. Krishna

consciousness is not is not stereotyped, hackneyed, or conformist. It's not a dogmatic religious trench. It is a versatile and dynamic spiritual network.

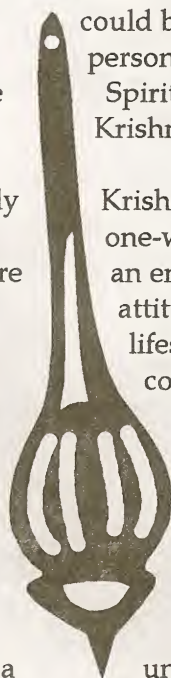
All diversity is unified and harmonized by devotion.

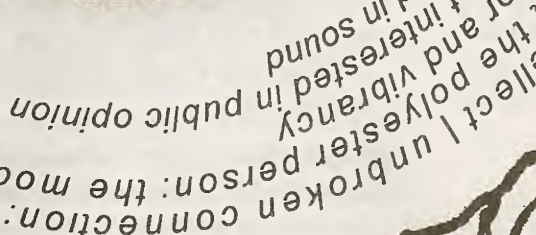
I don't think of 108 as a preachy band. "Give me a break," you might say. Preachy-ness isn't the point of 108. The point is devotion.

108 is expression of the hidden self to Krishna. That expression is so relishable, any open-hearted person will *naturally* become attracted. There is no need to *Preach*.

"Give me a break," you might say. Some of the songs are such blatant finger-pointers, how can I say they're not preachy? The finger I'm pointing is at the materialist within myself. That's why I do it with such venom.

But if the shoe fits, wear it. (Try it on. It fits).





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VRAJA: Do you have any good jokes?

KATE: A good joke? What's Kevin Seconds' blood type?

VRAJA: B-Positive. . . Do you have any good jokes?

KATE: Well *I* thought it was a good joke.

VRAJA: At least one person does.

KATE: *[laughs]*

VRAJA: You go to college?

KATE: Yes.

VRAJA: Now, school itself is enough stress; but on top of that, you strictly practice Krishna consciousness -- which is quite a serious task. Doesn't that fizz you out? It must be hard to go to college *and* be a devotee at the same time.

KATE: It *would* be easier to just concentrate on devotional service. But then again, going to college is part of my devotional service, because I'm learning things that I can use in Krishna's service.

VRAJA: Still, I remember all the stuff that went on in my dorm. . .

KATE: Yeah, it's hard. All day I have to associate with people who don't even know that I'm a devotee, and talk about a lot of junk that I basically don't want to hear about. On the other hand, it's a devotional sacrifice, because I know that what I'm learning now I'll be able to use in my devotional service later.

VRAJA: Like what?

KATE: I'm learning how to organize my thoughts and be more concise and clear in my writing (I'm really into writing). Also, I'm doing my senior project on Lord Caitanya; everyone will find out I'm a devotee and they'll be like, "Oh, you've been normal the whole time." They'll be like, "Oh that's cool. So what's it like being a devotee?" Someone who *only* sees me chanting and dancing on the street might think, "It's just a weirdo Hare Krishna;" but the people in my class already know me as a person, so when they found out that I was a Hare Krishna they

didn't immediately shut their minds.

VRAJA: That's kind of like what happens with us in the hardcore scene; we're not "freaks of nature" we're part of the same scene as everyone else. There's a better platform for communication - because we can relate to each other.

KATE: Yeah.

VRAJA: Then again, some people think it's sinister. They think we purposely "infiltrate" the scene to seem "normal;" then we catch them off guard and snatch them into our cult.

KATE: I guess there are so many cheaters in today's society, everyone becomes suspicious of everyone else. They're really nervous about being cheated again, so they're like "You're just trying to trick us into being Hare Krishna's."

Anyway, that's the hardcore scene, but it's not at all like that in college. They're more like, "Oh wow, Eastern philosophy? That's interesting." I took one of my classes to the temple. They don't think I'm trying to trick them. They see me as a college student who lives by a really different and interesting philosophy.

VRAJA: How do *you* see yourself, in relation to hardcore? Honestly, are you a hardcore person into Krishna, or a Krishna into hardcore?

KATE: If I had to choose between the hardcore scene and the devotees, obviously I would choose the devotees. Living at the temple is like my life and soul. But I'm a hardcore girl too; I always have been.

Actually, it's not like I'm one or the other -- Hare Krishna *or* hardcore. It's just two sides of the same me. I don't see them as two disjointed entities.

I express my inner Krishna consciousness in an outer way through 108, through hardcore. I don't think it's contradictory.

VRAJA: Are you loyal to the scene itself?

KATE: I would say I'm actually pretty loyal to the hardcore scene, even though it often lets me down.

VRAJA: What I'm really asking is, are you *true till*



KATE: No, I guess not.

VRAJA: It doesn't seem like too many people in the hardcore scene get married.

KATE: I think we're like the only two. I don't even think Roger and Amy are really married. It was really weird -- we got married in the first week of June and played a show in New York City the second week. All these random hardcore kids I've never met before were coming up to me saying, "Congratulations on your marriage."

Actually my father first found out about it from some hardcore kid who ran into my brother in the city and told him.

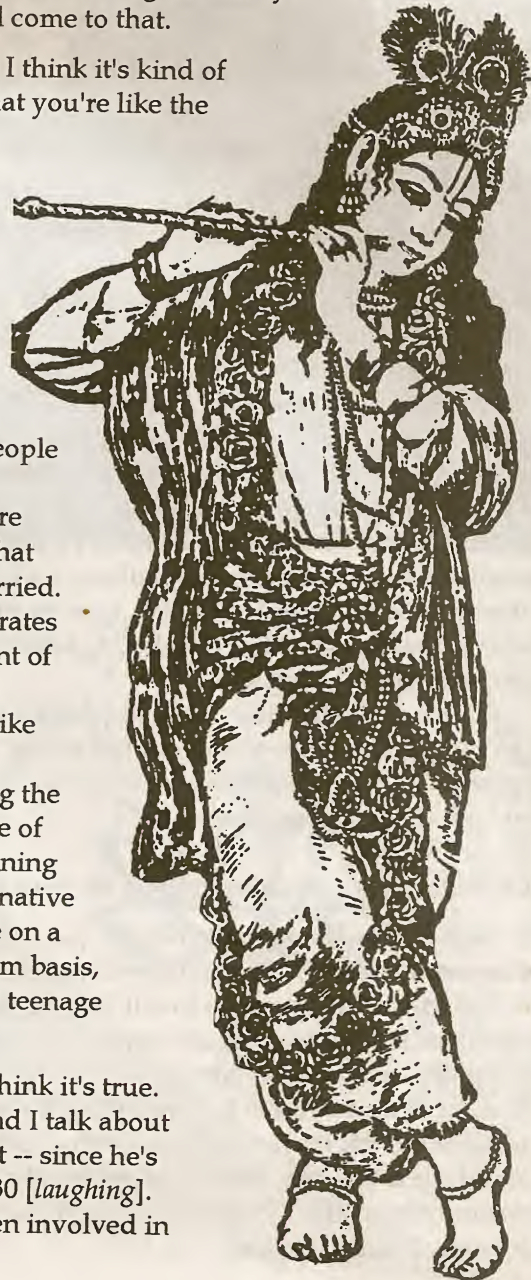
VRAJA: You never told your parents?

KATE: I did, but this wasn't the big ceremony. We still haven't had the big ceremony. They'll come to that.

VRAJA: I think it's kind of cool that you're like the

only people in the hardcore scene that are married. It illustrates the point of pale. It seems like you're showing the example of maintaining an alternative lifestyle on a long term basis, past the teenage years.

KATE: I think it's true. Steve and I talk about this a lot -- since he's almost 30 [laughing]. He's been involved in



KATE: I'm true till 30! [laughs] I'm Punk!

VRAJA: You're not *that* punk. What about that soft, mushy band you're doing?

KATE: OK, I admit it: I've got a mushy side. On one hand, I really like to rock out and do 108; it lets me express a lot of things that are partially unbecoming for a young lady to express. But on the other hand, I like to sing and write pretty songs. So I'm doing this band with Norm from Shelter, and Chris Daily.

Lyricaly, the songs are in the mood of 108. It's not like Shelter; it's more an internal mood, more like 108. In this band, I'm not so interested in telling everybody about the misery of the material world; I want to show them the beauty of Krishna Consciousness. To show the nice side, not the bad.

VRAJA: Would you say that 108 is guilty of showing the bad side?

KATE: I don't know. The "bad side" isn't unrealistic. Some people cope with things in one way and some people in another. For me it's really been a relief to finally cope with the miseries, come face to face with them and confront them in an honest way. But sometimes it seems like there's too much negative focus on how bad the material world is, and not enough positive focus on how beautiful Krishna is. A lot of kids we meet only see the negative side -- "This, this, and this is negative." I'd like to say "this, this, and this is beautiful and positive." I'd rather think about the pretty aspects.

To think about the beautiful aspects of Krishna is a higher level than simply thinking about the negative aspects of the material world. It is more effective for spiritual advancement, too.

VRAJA: What's your favorite Krishna pastime?

KATE: When the cowherd girls heard the sound of Krishna's flute.

VRAJA: Yeah?

KATE: All the different gopis are saying "Oh, I wish I was the bamboo flute! Even though it's just a stick it gets to be with Krishna all the time. I wish I was with Krishna all the time."

Then they describe how lucky the river is. The river feeds and grows the bamboo that becomes the flute; so the river is like the mother of the bamboo -- "She must be so proud of her baby. . ." I just like it, it's a great pastime.

VRAJA: Is it weird to be married?

hardcore since I was nine years old. Still, without the support of a spiritual society it's hard not to get beaten into a situation where you have to go mainstream, get a job, etc. (Not that getting a job automatically wrecks your spiritual life; but some jobs may go against your system of morals).

There's only so long you can be "alternative." Even the people you once hung out with seem to become so mainstream. They become the people they once "rebelled"

against. I see it happen all the time. The most "true till death" was more like "true till college."

VRAJA: What does it take? Why do so many people fade?

KATE: I think it has to do with the reason *why* people get into "alternative" scenes. There's the genuine desire to change the injustices of the material world; but there's also the cheap desire for fame and admiration. You know -- more straight edge, more vegan, more dreadlocked than you, etc. These desires lead people back into the mainstream world, which is tailor built around such cheap desires. To maintain an alternative lifestyle you need something deeper than the desire to be the most punk. You have to reject outside society and become attached to something higher, something spiritual.

I think it's interesting that a 50 year-old devotee can go to a hardcore show and not feel out of place. My parents will be like "I'm too old for that." You'll never hear a devotee say that.

VRAJA: What's your favorite song on the new album?

KATE: **Solitary confinement.** When we play **solitary confinement** and say, "Each moment without you I die! Oh Krishna!" I just get so into it. It really means so much to me. It's not like I'm just superficially playing the song; it's really deeply meaningful to me.

A lot of times you're told you should really *cry out* to Krishna, but it's not like something I often do. It seems a little awkward. But at a show, it's the perfect opportunity to really *cry out* to Krishna at the top of your lungs. I really like that.



VRAJA: Apparently it's not exactly the traditional role of a Hare Krishna lady to be in a hardcore band (Of course, it's probably no more traditional for a *brahmachari* like myself to be in a hardcore band either!). Do you get any flack for it?

KATE: Actually, I haven't gotten any.

VRAJA: Is it difficult to be in a band with a bunch of guys?

KATE: Well, we like to keep our privacy. You know, as devotee's we generally like to stay together, and have the boys somewhere else. That can be kind of hard on tour.

I've gotten letters where people say, "I hear you're not allowed to stand with the men," as though that's what I *want* to do. It's such a sexist viewpoint, as if the men were so much better than us -- and we really *wish* we could be with

the guys, but we're not *allowed* to. We're not so utterly dependent. We're happy associating with the other women. It's fun for us. It's for girls only! [laughing]

VRAJA: What is your favorite kind of *prasadam*?

KATE: OK... Oh boy... My favorite kind of *prasadam*. My all time favorite kind of *prasadam* is *halava*. Definitely! It comes in so many kinds of flavors and they're all good.

VRAJA: What was the best Krishna-feast you ever had?

KATE: It was in India on Gaura Mandala Parikrama.¹ We had two different kinds of rice, three kinds of *sabjis*, *dahl*, as many *capatis* as we wanted, and we had lemons

it's not like I'm one or the other -- Hare Krishna or hardcore. It's just two sides of the same me. I don't see them as two disjointed entities. I express my inner Krishna consciousness in an outer way through 108, through hardcore. I don't think it's contradictory.

to squeeze all over it. The lemons in India are like a cross between a lemon and a lime -- they're awesome. We also had sweets: *gulab-jamuns*, *jalebes*, and this stuff called *misthi-dahi*.²

VRAJA: Will you do another Krsna Grrrl 'zine?

KATE: Yeah, really soon -- as soon as these sell out.

VRAJA: How is it selling?

KATE: We sold half of them to distributors, that's 500 copies. I've sold a lot at shows.

VRAJA: What has the response been? Well, I'm more interested in *your* response -- how do you feel about the way it came out?

KATE: I really like it. Obviously, I think there's a lot of things we could improve. I'd like to have more input from other people; and more interviews. I'd also like pictures of *other* people -- not just me and Sarah (we just didn't have any other pictures at the time).

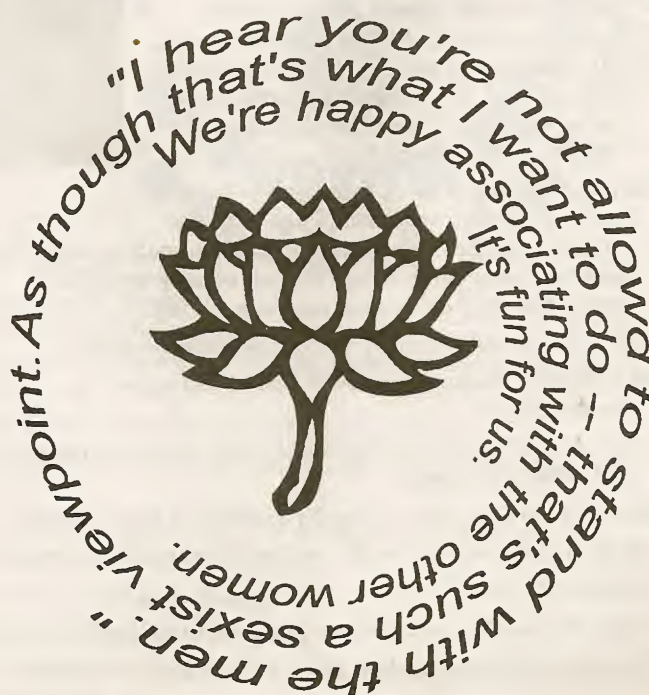
I feel really happy about it. It has a lot of different angles on Krishna consciousness that people don't usually get exposed to. Most of what everybody knows about Krishna is pretty much from Shelter. But Sarah and I, because of our bodies and our subtle bodies (because we're women), naturally we have kind of like a different feel or different mood in presenting Krishna consciousness.

VRAJA: What is the meaning of "super-gopi"?

KATE: [laughing] I don't know! OK, this is what it means (and Steve agrees with me). At first I thought it was bogus, but then I was talking to Steve and I said it was kind of a nice meditation: the *gopis* are the best devotees of Krishna, and I wish I was a better servant of Krishna.

VRAJA: Do you have any good jokes yet?

KATE: [laughs]



¹*Gaura Mandala Parikrama* is a 7 day barefoot walking and camping tour around the holy town called Mayapur; which is where Krishna appeared 500 years ago as Sri Caitanya.

²*Sabji* is a generic term for mixed vegetable preparations. *Dhal* is a generic term for types of soup made with spiced Indian beans. *Chapati* is an Indian-style tortilla. *Gulab-jamuns* are light, airy curd-balls deep fried in sugar-water. *Jalebes* are super-sweet miniature pretzels made out of chick-pea flour (for lack of a better description). *Misthi-dahi* is condensed, sweetened milk, made into sweet yogurt.

Direct perception is certainly required for full appreciation of these transcendental culinary delights!

VRAJA KISHOR DAS: OK, this question just can't wait: Why did you cut your hair? Is there any symbolic meaning behind it?

FRANKLIN: No, I just got sick of it.

VKD: What's your favorite *prasadam*?

FRANKLIN: Favorite kind of *prasadam*? Maybe milk-sweets.

VKD: Milk-sweets! [laughs] Milk-sweets. . . You just lost all your points with the vegans.

FRANKLIN: I guess so. I never took to veganism anyway. [laughing] I might make a lot of enemies off this. . . I do think veganism is a good thing; but there's certain aspects of it that I'm not so crazy about.

VKD: Like what?

FRANKLIN: Well many vegans condemn milk-drinking because it's indirectly connected to animal slaughter. But in this age of Kali, there's *nothing* that isn't connected to such evil. We go to a supermarket to buy vegetables — our money supports their store, which supports meat eating and meat-eaters. Even the veggies and fruits themselves involve pesticides that kill off countless bugs, endanger the food chain for animals, destroy the environment, and so on. Even organic stuff is fertilized by waste materials from slaughterhouses. It's inevitable. No matter what you do, you support something cruel. I don't see the logic in singling out milk and being so "hard-line" about it.

VKD: OK.

FRANKLIN: The whole material world is cruel. Real cruelty-free living is spiritual. Ultimately it comes down to spiritualizing the food by offering it to Krishna.

VKD: That flips most people out.

FRANKLIN: Well. . .

VKD: OK, but that doesn't totally negate a vegan diet, does it? What if someone agrees with what you've said: the whole material world is cruel, etc. — they agree with that, but they're vegan, but they offer all their food to Krishna. . . What about that?

FRANKLIN: That's great, more power to them. I'm not *opposed* to veganism. I just think it's childish to single out milk and get so wrapped up in it, when there's so many other things that are equally involved in animal cruelty. I do respect veganism, though.

VKD: I think that's clear. . . Who's your favorite *acarya*?

FRANKLIN: There are so many! Bhaktisiddhanta? Madhvacarya?

VKD: A lot of people will have absolutely no idea what we just said. What's an *acarya*?

FRANKLIN: One who teaches by example; a divine teacher.

VKD: Madhva was on the Perfection of Desire album cover?

FRANKLIN: Yeah!

VKD: Do you have any favorite pastimes from them?

FRANKLIN: I liked reading about when Bhaktisiddhanta's

was doing a lot of intensive writing and chanting — 192 rounds a day — preparing for his later days, spreading the Krishna consciousness movement. He was an undefeatable *simha-guru*.

VKD: I love that one line he wrote, 'The materialistic demeanor cannot possibly stretch to the Transcendental Autocrat, Who is forever free and inviting the conditioned souls to associate with Him in devotion, or eternal serving mood.' Hey, we should make a song out of that. You would be psyched.

FRANKLIN: Yeah, I would.

VKD: What about Madhva? I know one of the reasons you like Madhva is because he was a big eater.

FRANKLIN: Yeah, that was a nice pastime. I also like how he took *sannyas*¹ at the age of 12. I just liked his anti-impersonalist spirit.

VKD: You are pretty heavy against impersonalism, why?

FRANKLIN: Because it's so bogus. They go around saying "You are God. I am God. He is God." Meanwhile everyone is suffering in the material world. If you're God, why are you

being forced to suffer illusion and ignorance? It's such a bogus theory.

VKD: I've never really heard anyone running around saying, "Everyone is God."

FRANKLIN: I guess it's big among new age people or something. They use different terminology sometimes. Their theory is that everything is one, we're the same as the Creator, etc.. I just don't see it as true.

VKD: Do any 108 songs deal with this?

FRANKLIN: No, but I like that song *woman*, lyrically as well as

musically. Men's rights, women's rights — it's pointless. Real equal rights will come when we stop pretending to be men or women. Everyone is an equal and should be judged by their ability and inclination, not by their body.

VKD: Aha. . .

FRANKLIN: The music's great! Metal! I like how it puts down men for using women as like their trophies and stuff. I also like *deathbed* a lot. The lyrics are so in-your-face, so real; and the music fits the mood too.

VKD: Really? "In-your-face?" That's a new slant on the lyrics for me.

FRANKLIN: They're undeniable. The lyrics are undeniable, and they're really graphic. They really hit me. Even before I knew them — when I would just hear Rob sing the chorus, it



really hit me.

VKD: As of now, you still haven't played any shows with us.

FRANKLIN: Nope. I'm wondering what it's gonna be like. It's gonna be real different, something I've never done before.

VKD: How did you end up in 108?

FRANKLIN: Oh, I don't know. . . maybe Krishna's arrangement. I wanted to do music with *Krishna-bhakti* and this just popped up. I just take it as Krishna's blessing.

VKD: You're the mystery bass player.

FRANKLIN: Yeah, the mysterious one.

VKD: What's your favorite Krishna pastime?

FRANKLIN: There's quite a few.. I really, really love the story: "Lord Krishna Fights Banasura" It's about this devotee of Siva, who heard The Yadus were attacking his city, so he sent his army after them.² Siva joined on his side; so it was Siva and Krishna, one on one. Siva sent ghosts, demons, and zombies after Krishna, and Krishna fought them all off. Krishna and Siva were attacking each other with *mantra* weapons like sleeping spells, fire, ice etc. The demigods watched it like a sporting match, from their airplanes. Siva was defeated and the second half of the story is Him praying to Krishna. It was one of the first pastimes I ever read and it's totally climactic start to end.

I also like the story when Krishna leaves Vrindaban on Akrura's chariot and the *gopis* stand on the road in sadness, watching the chariot disappearing down the horizon. That part hits a soft spot in my heart for some reason. I also like when Mother Yasoda sees the universe in Baby Krishna's mouth.³

VKD: Most of the hardcore kids that get into Krishna consciousness are from a straightedge background. That's not the case with you.

FRANKLIN: No, not at all.

VKD: So what's it like for you at the shows, where a lot of the kids are straight-edge?

FRANKLIN: It doesn't bother me, because I *am* straight. The reason why I never got into straightedge is because I always saw it as a sectarian thing. Even though a lot of people will say it isn't sectarian, many of them only accept you if you're straightedge. More power to the sincere straightedge; but most of those people that had these super X-on-the-hand straight bands aren't even straight anymore. They're all *great* role models, *true to the end*.

VKD: You said the straightedge crowd seemed sectarian and cliquey - if you weren't straightedge, they wouldn't accept you - but can't you say the same exact thing about devotees?

FRANKLIN: Not really. With the devotees it's different. Like when I first started coming to the temple. . . people knew I was still getting high and stuff, but I never felt like I was being condemned. Even if a devotee falls from Krishna consciousness, there's not that attitude of condemnation.

Compare that to the straightedge scene. I mean, I've even seen entire 'zines completely dedicated to condemning former straightedge heroes. I don't see this among devotees. It's different, more on a spiritual platform.

VKD: Good point. How do you feel about straightedge now that you've stopped getting high?

FRANKLIN: I do think it's good, because it takes kids away from drugs and other negative things. It's definitely better than

being a pothead like I was! [laughs] Now that 108 and Shelter have added Krishna consciousness, I think straightedge can evolve to something deeper. Instead of just "being straight" in a dogmatic way, Krishna consciousness lays down a whole philosophical support behind it.

VKD: What do you mean by *dogma*?

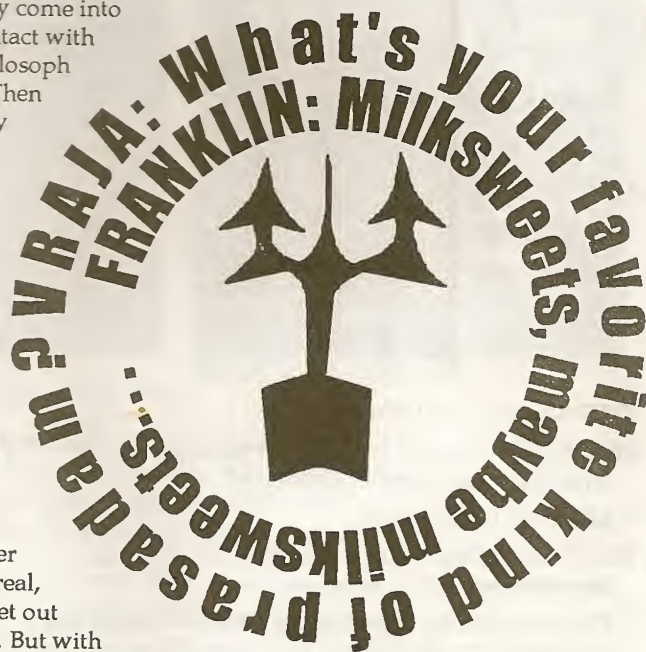
FRANKLIN: They just do it as a ritual, without understanding the meaning behind it. A lot of times with these kids it's just a hip clique to get down with. They go straight for some superficial reason.

VKD: You can say the same thing about kids that get into Krishna consciousness - it's just a hip clique.

FRANKLIN: I've noticed that too. I guess people can make anything cheap. But for someone to stick with Krishna consciousness for even a few weeks, they *have to be* understanding deeper, more philosophical things about it, otherwise, they wouldn't be able to keep it up.

I mean, someone might *get into* Krishna consciousness because it's a hip clique, but once they get a hold of a book, a few sentences later it turns into another story. It changes their life. Their knowledge deepens. There's nothing like that in straightedge. It comes around to the song *pale*. With Krishna consciousness you can just keep getting deep and deeper into it - but with straightedge, people get out of it after awhile. Everything material comes to an end.

VKD: I see what your saying. Even if someone gets into Krishna as a fad, inevitably they come into contact with philosophy. Then they



either get real, or get out of it. But with straightedge, there's no developed philosophical foundation to take them into deeper knowledge about what their doing.

FRANKLIN: Yeah, that's what I'm trying to say.

VKD: [laughing] There's no *Vedic* literature from the straightedge scene.

FRANKLIN: [laughing] No, I've never seen anything like that before.

VKD: "Sri Straightedge Samhita."

FRANKLIN: [laughs]

VKD: What you're saying is true - But I think it will hurt a lot of people's feelings.

FRANKLIN: Yeah, true. I'm not doing this to be offensive. Like I said before people should be accepted for what they are. I don't hate straight-edge people, not at all! I think it's good, overall. It gives people the chance to get their heads above water - and maybe that helps them take to Krishna consciousness. These kids seem to take to it much better than the usual mainstream college preppy type.

VKD: Why is that?

FRANKLIN: I think they have a more realistic view of the world - seeing the negative side of things like drinking, and all that. They're not as stubborn and set in their ways.

VKD: Why did you take to Krishna consciousness?

FRANKLIN: Well I saw that getting high was just not the answer. It was becoming repetitious, drab, boring - the same thing everyday. I guess I was into getting high because I was looking for something, or escaping from something. I knew about Krishna consciousness and I eventually quit everything and took Krishna more seriously.

The reason why I never got into straight edge is because I always saw it as a sectarian thing.



VKD: Got any good jokes?

FRANKLIN: Here's one. What did the *mayavadi* say when he walked into a pizza shop?

VKD: I told you that one!

FRANKLIN: [laughing] No you didn't. I overheard Satyaraja telling it to someone.

VKD: What did the *mayavadi* say when he walked into a pizza shop? "Make me one with everything!"⁴

FRANKLIN: [laughing] Yeah! That's the only spiritual joke I know!

VKD: It's a good joke (nobody else thinks so). . . Is there anything else you want to say?

FRANKLIN: About impersonalism. . . It's just downright bogus.

¹*Sannyas* is a very serious vow of complete dedication to the service of the Supreme, and total rejection of material comforts and sense gratification.

²The *Yadus* are Krishna's "relatives."

³For more information on these pastimes, see: Krishna Book, Chapter 62 (Lord Krishna Fights with Banasura); Krishna Book, Chapter 38 (Akrura's Return Journey...); and Krishna Book, Chapter 8 (Vision of the Universal Form).

⁴*Mayavadi* is the technical term for impersonalist rascals who want to merge into the spiritual light beyond the material world by "becoming one with everything."

VRAJA: What's your favorite *prasadam*?

CHRIS: I remember when Rob took me to 2nd Ave. . . I remember eggplant *pakor*s. God, they were the best. But since then my favorite is potato *sabji*.²

VRAJA: I never knew you went to 2nd Ave before the tour?

CHRIS: Yeah, way before the tour. Rob and Lenny took me one night, a long time ago.

VRAJA: What did you think about it?

CHRIS: You know, it was a little weird at first, but cool when you

VRAJA: Then you *did* have exposure to devotees before you



went on tour.

CHRIS: Yeah.

VRAJA: Because some people seem to think that you flipped out overnight. First you're a normal straightedge kid and then, bam! you're "super-bhakta" in 108.

CHRIS: [laughing] I mean, I was already into Krishna; not seriously though. When you guys asked me to tour, I thought it was a good opportunity. Plus, me and Rob wanted to get away from Ressurrection for a while. . . I thought it would be fun. I knew the guys from Shelter because Ressurrection played shows with them; so I thought it'd be a lot of fun to go on tour with 108.

Anyway, when you guys asked me to do the 108 tour, I took it as a good opportunity to open my mind up and experiment with Krishna consciousness a little. The results were good, so. . .

VRAJA: Was it wierd?

CHRIS: Was what wierd?

VRAJA: Was it wierd to join 108?

CHRIS: First it was like scary because... "can I play *this*?" I wanted to play it perfect. First I was shaky, but when I got comfortable with the music it just flowed so well. It's so much fun to play. I've been playing drums since I was a kid. It's the only thing I'm good at; the only thing I stuck with. I like to play a lot of different styles and stuff -- and with 108, especially the new album, there's so many different styles. It's fun.

VRAJA: Which songs do you like?

CHRIS: Well, off the old album definitely Holynama. Rob played me the 108 tape like a million years ago, right after you guys finished it. I was like "this is the greatest song I've ever heard." I always loved that song. I love the way the lyrics fit the music. It's my all-time favorite 108 song.

VRAJA: That was *the* first song we wrote.

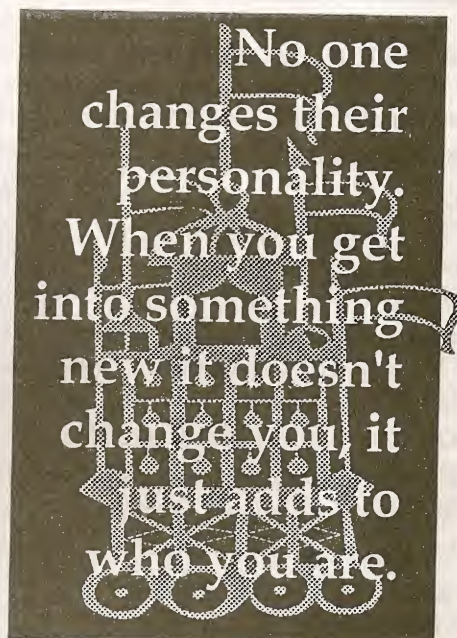
service. Like me, I'm pretty much just a "hardcore kid." I mean, I always go to shows and stuff. So maybe some people could relate to me more easily. Then there's you, and Kate, and Rob, and Franklin. . . I think it's one of the things that makes a band good. If all five people were completely the same, that would be so stale. With 108, we're all completely different -- but we all have the same goals.

VRAJA: Some people seem to think all devotees are identical (i.e. *i am not*).

CHRIS: That isn't the coolest thing.

VRAJA: You're definately a funny person.

CHRIS: [*clearing his throat*] Well, that's what they say. . . I guess I've just always been that way, comical. I like to



CHRIS: Off the new album I like woman and deathbed.

VRAJA: How do music and lyrics relate, for you?

CHRIS: The lyrics are so important; they bring the message through the song. I mean, you can make awesome music, but if the lyrics are just stupid and mindless. . . it just loses something for me. With 108, all the lyrics have very positive meaning. I think that makes the music even more powerful.

VRAJA: The music seems important too. If your music stinks; your great lyrics won't ever get listened to.

CHRIS: I think it's like 50% each, music and lyrics.

VRAJA: It seems like everyone in the band has their own very distinct character and personality.

CHRIS: I think that makes it really cool. Out of the five of us, there must be at least *one* that you can relate to. I don't see how anyone can not relate to at least *one* of us. I can't see how someone could say, "Ah, I like 108, but I just can't feel comfortable with any of them." We're all so different. I guess it's because we're all at different stages of devotional

make people laugh.

VRAJA: I admire that about you. A lot of people think that, to become a devotee, they have to photocopy someone else's personality and wear it like a halloween costume. They think they have to change their personality. . .

CHRIS: No; not at all, no one changes their personality. When you get into something new it doesn't change you, it just *adds* to who you are. Take Raghunatha or Porcell for example; I mean I don't notice a dramatic difference. Look at Porcell, he's just as goofy as he ever was! [*laughing*] But now he's doing something good with his life. And the same with me; I'm still the same person I always was, but I've *added* something important.

¹26 2nd Ave is the first temple of Krishna outside India, opened by Prabhupada in the late '60's. 108 was fortunate enough to live there for 3 months, during the period when we recorded songs of separation.

²Pakoras are vegetables dipped in a chick-pea flour batter, and deep-fried. *Sabji* is a mixed vegetable preparation.

³Bhajana is devotional music - usually in Sanskrit or Bengali language.



VRAJA: All-right Robert J., first you have to explain your "feature" in Krsna Grrrl fanzine.

ROB: It was the first suspension notice of my career, my rookie year. I guess I had a lot of "F" papers hidden in my

desk. My teacher thought my parents should see them. I didn't. So I forged their names, twice. . . But I guess my teacher wasn't as ignorant as I thought.

VRAJA: What was the rest of your "career" like?

ROB: My school career was pretty *illustrious*.

"Entertaining," to say the least. I did good grade-wise, but I got suspended like once a week.

Vraja: You "did good grade-wise?"
How'd you get all those "F" papers in your desk?

ROB: Oh, that was like first grade. I guess I was just stupid then.

VRAJA: What was your worst class?

ROB: Philosophy.

VRAJA: Really? For me it was shop, I hated the smell.

ROB: I liked shop, cause I could just hang out with all the metal kids and talk about music. But I didn't like philosophy. I *thought* I was going to like it. I thought I was this big "philosopher."

That's what I went to college for too -- I majored in philosophy and sociology. . . Quit after three weeks.

VRAJA: You said, "Sociologist, your plan is useless."

ROB: Yeah. I just decided to be punk rock.

VRAJA: Honestly, what's your worst fear?

ROB: Failure. . . In everything I've ever done -- being a devotee, or doing a band, or playing sports -- my worst fear was that I would fail at it; fall flat on my face. Especially since I grew up constantly playing sports; all you care about is winning. I guess that fear of loosing got so ingrained, it carried over into the rest of my life.

VRAJA: I'm more afraid of success. I would try really

hard and get really good at whatever I was doing, but right at the point of success I would give it up. I was afraid that if I actually achieved the goal, it would be a let-down.

ROB: I have something similar to that too. Like with being in a band. . . Once you achieve success you start going downhill into failure.

VRAJA: I haven't really found that sort of thing in my attempts to be Krishna conscious.

ROB: Yeah.

VRAJA: How does your fear of failure affect you in trying to be a devotee?

ROB: I think it's the reason why I struggled for a couple of years. I became a devotee. I moved into a temple -- but I didn't really know so much about it. I mean, I knew the basics of the philosophy, but. . . the more I learned about it, the more I realized how much of a difficult thing it is. I started thinking, "God, I'll never achieve these things. I'll never attain these qualities."

VRAJA: It seemed too far out of your reach?

ROB: Yeah. I used that as an excuse to just give it up altogether, cop out, and run away from it. I was afraid that if I really went for it and failed, then I would just be a flop.

I figured, "OK, I'll *kinda* be a devotee. I'll hang out with the devotees, but I won't try to achieve anything with it." Still, I found that sense of failure.

VRAJA: How so?

ROB: If you know something is right, but you still don't try to do it, that's a failure in itself. The sense of humiliation may not come from the people around you, but it comes from within. Finally, I had to get myself together and try to become more

serious.

VRAJA: How'd you get over your fear and do that?

ROB: I started to understand that there is no failure in being a devotee. The effort *is* the success. The attempt *is* the goal. The means *is* the ends. Yeah, I might not be this advanced devotee who has no desire. I'm not. I probably never will be. Realistically, I'm never going to be. But that's not a failure, because I'm doing the best I can. I'm doing whatever I'm capable of.

VRAJA: Krishna is interested in the devotion we put in our effort, not in the external measure of our success. . . Does this relate to **shun the mask**?

I think that's why I struggled for a couple of years. I became a devotee. I moved into a temple -- but I didn't really know so much about it. The more I learned about it, the more I realized how difficult it is. I started thinking, "God, I'll never achieve these things."

ROB: Yeah. That song relates to how I saw this part of me I didn't like, but was too afraid to really change. But now I'm so frustrated with that side of me, I'll do whatever it takes to throw away that self-imagery-mask, push it away -- figure out who I am for real; not who I was molded to be.

That's the thing about 108 I always liked, even when I wasn't in the band: The lyrics. They're self--challenging. Although a lot of the song's say "you, you, you," it's really more like I'm standing there pointing at myself. It's self-scrutiny; especially with songs like **thorn**, or **woman**.

VRAJA: Where'd you get all these fancy hand movements anyway?

ROB: [laughing] I don't know.

VRAJA: It's like a karate chop.

ROB: I'm not really conscious of it, I don't know.

VRAJA: You mentioned that 108 is "self-scrutinizing." Some people think it's just a front to preach and suck kids into a cult.

ROB: That's funny. I don't do anything to "preach" to anybody but myself. Besides, I *love* music. Even before I got into Krishna, even before I got into Hardcore -- as soon as I got out of sports, I got really into rap. Music has always been a big thing in my life. It's such a cool way to express yourself.

VRAJA: Is that one of the "attachments" you'll have to give up?

ROB: No. It's a way to express yourself -- so now I want to express my spirit-self. Krishna consciousness *centers* around music. That's one of the things that first attracted me to it -- all the *bhajans*, and songs, and chants, and poems.

VRAJA: All right, why don't we talk about those two songs you mentioned, **thorn**, and **woman**.

ROB: They address my own struggles. Like **woman**; it's about seeing someone as your source of pleasure, by having them look at you as. . . as their God, basically.

VRAJA: Your "source of pleasure?"

ROB: Yeah, I'm looking for someone to *enjoy*. My sense of enjoyment is to have them look up to me as their God, "Wow. . . he's my everything. He's my 'security.'" *Everybody* wants that, in *any* kind of relationship -- even if it's just two friends. You want to be looked up to, you want to be their source of inspiration -- their *life*, basically.

VRAJA: But is that *wrong*?

ROB: . . . Yeah. Because, (at least for *me*) I just want

everyone else in the world to play along with the whole self-glorification fantasy I'm so wrapped up in. I want people to think that I'm this great person.

VRAJA: Well what's wrong with that?

ROB: There's nothing wrong with wanting to people to think you're a good person; but not that your *perfect*, the *best*, the most important personality. "If you're friends with *me*, I can give you everything."

VRAJA: Pretending to be someone you're not: Krishna.

ROB: With sex, it wasn't so much that I was trying to get pleasure for myself. It was more like I was trying to please the person I was with. Not in a selfless way, but only to make them think I was "#1." For me, it always came out the most in boy-girl relationships. It's something that I'm struggling with everyday. That's why I hated the song so much when you first sent it to me (about a year and a half ago). I hated it. "It's about *me* man! I *hate* this song."

At the same time, that's also exactly what attracted me to it. It was so real to me. Finally I got so fed up with being the subject of the song. . .

That's the best way to solve a problem -- you have to keep pounding, "All-right, this is the problem. I have to *do* something about it." Every time I sing this song, I'm forced to face my problem. That's why it's my favorite 108 song, it means the most to me.

VRAJA: How about **thorn**?

ROB: **Thorn** is the same way; boy-girl relationships. *Sex*? It used to be my biggest thing. I was really trapped in it. And every time I'd have sex, afterwards I'd kinda be bummed. It didn't really live up to what it was supposed to be; so I figured I just had to get *more*. It was an addiction.

Most of the times, during the day, I felt like I was a pretty righteous person: I didn't drink, didn't smoke, I was vegetarian, you know. . . But then, sex -- I was so addicted to it, it made me into someone I didn't want to be -- like an animal or something. It was so aggravating and frustrating; but I couldn't get out of it. That fear of failure: "I know I don't really want to be like this -- but I'll never be able to change. I'll never be able to get away from sex. *Oh well*. . ." and I just indulged in it.

VRAJA: It's interesting that you describe sex as an addiction.



Many people would say that what you're doing now (Krishna consciousness) is an addiction.

ROB: But look what it's doing to me: I'm happy. Sex wasn't making me happy. Yeah, maybe I am addicted to Krishna consciousness, but I'm *happy*. Isn't that what everybody wants.

VRAJA: I'm happy being addicted to sex.

ROB: *Yeah right.*

VRAJA: [laughs]

ROB: Sex was a *false* addiction; in the sense that it didn't really make me happy. It only gave me more anxieties and worries, "I have to get more. Maybe if I do it *again* it'll make me happy."

Spiritual addiction is a *good* thing, because it works -- it does make me happy. So maybe I *am* "addicted" to Krishna consciousness. . . Actually, I'm *not* addicted to it. If I was, then I wouldn't have a problem trying to make myself more Krishna conscious. With sex, I didn't have to *make* myself want it.

VRAJA: Doesn't that prove that sex is natural, and Krishna consciousness is unnatural? Why do you have to repress and force yourself?

ROB: I'm not *forcing* myself away from sex. I don't *want* it anymore. OK sex-desire comes easy, and I have to struggle to be Krishna conscious; but that *doesn't* prove sex is natural and Krishna consciousness is unnatural. All it proves is that I'm addicted to sex, and not Krishna.

An alcoholic has to *force* himself to give up drinking, right? Does that mean that alcoholism is natural??

VRAJA: Good point.

ROB: Yes, sex *is* natural; but it also has it's *natural* consequence.

VRAJA: "Natural consequence?"

ROB: Children.

VRAJA: *Children?*

ROB: Of course, it's not like every time you have sex, bam, you're going to have a child. But the natural outcome of natural sex is children.

VRAJA: "Natural sex?"

ROB: You know, if you don't interfere with it -- sex soon results in a child.

VRAJA: So you're saying it's not natural to "interfere" with the procreativity of sex?

ROB: Yeah. By indulging in sex I was stripping it of it's meaning; alienating it from nature. That isn't what sex is supposed to be about.

VRAJA: All-right, getting away from that topic. . . What was your favorite show last tour?

ROB: Pensacola. A lot of times people get a little too worked up at our shows. You know, they "dance" and stuff. But Pensacola was a really small show. It wasn't a "Shelter crowd" either; we were really foreign to them. When we said something between songs, it wasn't like they'd heard it before. . . they were interested. It seemed like they

were actually *thinking* about what we said. I liked their reaction.

VRAJA: What was their reaction?

ROB: They just kinda stood there. I like that, when kids just stand there and stare at you like you have three heads. At least you feel like you're putting some kind of thought in their head.



VRAJA: That brings up a question: Isn't it counter-productive when you have a band with a message, like 108, yet all these people are just "moshing" and "dancing up a storm" and doing "stage dives?"

ROB: No. That's them having fun. If they can have fun, and at the same time get something out of it -- fine. I just hate when it gets to the point where I can't even think about what I'm singing because I'm too busy making sure they're not going to get into a fist-fight. What I don't like is being someone's background music.

But my favorite shows, in any of the bands I've been in, have always been the one's where people just stood there and watched us. I feel like there's more communication that way. People should have fun at our shows, but they shouldn't forget the purpose: the communication.

VRAJA: It's nice to play in off-the-beaten-path places, but do you find that in the major "hardcore areas" people have a lot of misconceptions about you -- as in the song I am not?

ROB: [off-handedly] Yeah. I mean people have a lot of preconceptions about me personally, and the same thing is true with devotees in general. It is a problem. The only way it's going to get solved is if we communicate as people; not if we call each other names.

VRAJA: What's your favorite Krishna pastime?

ROB: [laughing] The coolest one is when He killed Kamsa in the wrestling arena.

VRAJA: You're definitely into sports. . .

ROB: [laughing] Yeah! I remember the first time I saw the picture of that pastime in Krishna-Book. I was like: "This is cool."

VRAJA: What's the picture look like?

ROB: I don't remember it so well, but there were these professional wrestlers (not like the WWF these days, but professional wrestlers), and Kamsa set up this whole rigged match so that they would wrestle with Krishna and Balarama and kill them.

It was cool, because Krishna and Balarama were these cute little kids -- and the wrestlers were bald, with mustaches, and had these huge muscles. In the picture you can see that Krishna is kinda smiling, while the wrestler has this really mean face on.

I remember, when I first came to a temple they had a photocopy of the rules Prabhupada wrote out when he first initiated devotees. . . One of the things was "No frivolous sports." I was just like "Oh no."

VRAJA: [laughing]

ROB: For some reason, I've always had this thing with sports. But then when I saw the picture, I thought -- "Oh cool! Krishna wrestles!"

VRAJA: What's the deal with that? Why was Krishna wrestling?

ROB: Well, you find a lot of cool little thing's in Krishna's pastimes. Krishna wasn't a wrestler, He was a cowherd boy; But in this particular pastime He wrestled. Kamsa had this whole plan to Kill Him and Krishna was just going along with it, having fun. It's kinda neat.

I guess the picture I've always had of Religion, or "GOD," has always been from a Christian background. There's no concept of God being a fun person, with all these little pastimes -- stealing butter, wrestling. I really thought that was cool -- how He wrestled.

VRAJA: You're known far and wide as an expert in sarcasm.

ROB: For me it's just a way to lighten things up, although I can sometimes hide behind it like a shield. I like to say the opposite of what I mean. A lot of people don't know how to take it -- they think I'm just being a jerk. But it's just my sense of humor.

VRAJA: In Sanskrit that's called *paroksha-vada*, I think. The eternal residents of Vrindaban speak with *paroksha-vada* -- indirect, crooked speech.

ROB: I remember the pastime you read us on the way to Vermont.

VRAJA: "Oh Kutila, your nose is so beautiful, it is defeating the beauty of the best of frogs. . ."

ROB: [laughing] Yeah. That was so funny.

VRAJA: So sarcasm is a way for you to lighten things up. Are you afraid of getting serious?

ROB: I don't know. I'm just not that kind of person. I do have strong convictions, and I'm very serious about them -- but I don't want to be heavy-handed with people. I like to joke around. It's my way, my personality.



¹ See *Nectar of Devotion*, Chapter 40.

108

विरहसंगीता

where will they be?
 where will they be?
 where will they be?
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when death closes your eyes -- where will they be?
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108/SONGS OF SEPARATION

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